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THE WINDS, THE WOODS,

AND

THE WANDERER.

"Turning his eyes to one side, he sees a young Indian seated on the trunk of a fallen tree."—*Page* 148.

THE WINDS, THE WOODS,

AND

THE WANDERER.

A Fable for Children.

BY

LILY F. WESSELHOEFT,

AUTHOR OF "SPARROW, THE TRAMP," AND "FLIPWING, THE SPY."

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PREFACE.

"Da ziehet leise, auf seine Weise,
Der Liebe Herrgott durch den Wald."

IN the story of "The Winds, the Woods, and the Wanderer," the author has endeavored to depict an artistic temperament that is misunderstood by the practical natures by which it is surrounded, — one that hears the voice of the "dear Lord God," as the Germans have it, speaking through the rustling of the forest-trees. This same artistic temperament the untutored Indian youth possessed; and the two natures were drawn together by the

love of the beautiful that was implanted in the soul of each, and that interpreted to them the voices of Nature which to others are as a sealed book.

LILY F. WESSELHOEFT.

Boston, April 26.

THE WINDS, THE WOODS, AND THE WANDERER.

CHAPTER I.

"THE large oak is really becoming unsightly," said Mr. Merton to his gardener, as they stood before an old oak, many of whose twisted and knotted branches were broken and bare of leaves. "We will have a handsome young tree planted in its place; and these dead limbs, cut into the proper length for the library fireplace, will last a long time. Yes, chop it down as soon as the busy season is over, and have it sawed and split and seasoned for the cool mornings and evenings next year."

The gardener was not as ready as usual with the "All right, sir!" that was his cus-

tomary answer to Mr. Merton's orders, and the words came so slowly and reluctantly that his master did not fail to notice the unusual hesitation. "Well, what is the trouble?" he asked. "It is rather a tough job, I know; but you can choose your time for it."

"That was not what I meant, sir," replied the gardener. "It was not the work I dreaded. The children, sir, are mighty fond of the old oak, and I'm thinking it will not please them to see their 'playhouse,' as they call it, chopped down;" and as he spoke, the gardener glanced from the high swing that was suspended from a sturdy limb of the old oak, to a little board laid across two branches midway of the tree, on which rested broken pieces of crockery, a somewhat battered tin dipper, and a lemonade-glass with the handle gone.

"Any other tree will do as well for them to play in, and this oak will burn finely;"

and Mr. Merton walked away, humming the words of a cheerful song, and the gardener, with another glance at the old tree and a mournful shake of the head, walked away too.

The old Oak rustled his scanty leaves, and a shiver ran through his branches.

"What a shame!" exclaimed a slender young white Birch that grew a few rods off and drooped her graceful branches over the brook; "who will be the next to go, I wonder?" and she glanced at the picture of herself the brook reflected, and shook one of her branches into a more graceful position.

"It is what I have been expecting for a long time," answered the old Oak, in a voice that was harsh and cracked from age; "and after all, it is just as well. My old limbs have become so brittle that they break instead of yielding to the rough north wind, and are full of rheumatic pains. Yes, it is just as well, I suppose."

"No, it is not just as well," replied the white Birch, earnestly; "you forget how much you can still enjoy. As soon as spring comes, your sap begins to flow as lively as any of ours, and you really have some very pretty branches yet;" and the white Birch cast another glance at the pretty image of her silvery branches the brook presented.

The old Oak was silent, and the serious expression of his knotted and wrinkled features showed him to be in deep thought.

"That cross old North-wind is enough to age anybody, I am sure," continued the white Birch, soothingly; "I know if I did not make believe I rather liked it, and allow him to toss my branches about as much as he pleased, I should n't have a whole branch left. Thank goodness, we sha'n't see him again for one while. Give me a *west* wind, if you please!"

"Thank you, my darling!" breathed the West-wind, who had stolen up behind and

given her branches a gentle toss. "If the North-wind had a particle of taste, he would be more considerate; but what can one expect of such a rough old fellow?"

The white Birch flaunted her leaves coquettishly at the West-wind, and even said, "Oh, do go away!" but she did n't really mean it, and the West-wind knew she did n't mean it; and so did a thin and shrivelled Fir-tree with many bare branches that stood near by, for she gave a contemptuous toss of her head.

"Perhaps when you have examined yourself sufficiently in the brook, you will give me a chance to obtain a hasty glimpse of my foliage," remarked the Fir-tree.

"Excuse me," replied the white Birch, pertly; "I really did n't observe that you had any foliage to arrange;" and she swept her long branches across the brook, and whisked a little shower of drops over the Fir-tree.

"That was done intentionally!" exclaimed the Fir-tree, indignantly. "You are so vain you think there is no beauty except in long, gawky branches and thin, rattling leaves. Did n't you hear Edmund say the other day that he intended to make a picture of the old Oak and me, that he admired our irregular outlines? Has n't he taste, I should like to know?"

"Don't quarrel, my friends," interposed the old Oak. "Is n't the news we have just heard a lesson on the uncertainty of human life? Dear Edmund! how can I leave the dear boy? Not one of my thoughts that he does not understand. The others too, — happy little Kate and honest, practical Fred! Yes, that is hard, — to feel them no more climbing over my old limbs;" and the Oak was silent, as his voice died away in a trembling whisper.

"There come the children!" called out the white Birch. "Now we shall know

what they think of it, if they have already heard the news."

Two boys and a girl came running towards the old Oak; the girl, a vigorous, bright-eyed child, outstripping the boys, and throwing her arms about the old Oak, kissed his rough bark passionately.

"I will not have it, you dear old tree!" she exclaimed violently. "I would rather they chopped my head off! No, you precious old thing, they shall not touch a single limb!"

"Don't be a silly!" said one of the boys, evidently her brother, judging from the similarity of the features, although the expression of the faces was totally different. "You act as if it were a live thing, and not a half-dead old tree."

"It *is* a live thing, I believe, Fred," answered the girl, warmly; "and I love it, and it loves me."

"I believe it too, Kate," said the other

boy; "it often seems to speak to me, and I am sure it understands me when I feel unhappy, for it rustles its leaves soothingly, as if it were trying to comfort me."

"Well, that *is* a joke," laughed Fred; "I always knew *you* were a little soft, Ed, but I thought Kate had more sense than to believe such nonsense."

"Edmund is *not* soft," replied Kate, warmly; "he loves the old tree as I do, and as you ought to. Just think of the good times we have had in it! And to think that we shall never have any more dinner-parties there!"

"The big chestnut on the lawn is just as good," replied Fred, "and much smoother. Just see all these great knots and twisted branches!"

"That is the beauty of the tree," exclaimed Edmund, enthusiastically. "See here! I made this picture of it last night. Is it natural?"

The next morning was gray and dismal, with a raw east-wind blowing. Everything looked dreary and gloomy; and the East-wind seemed to enjoy the discomfort he created, and whistled through every unprotected cranny he could discover with an expression of as keen enjoyment as his discontented features were capable of expressing.

The old Oak braced himself firmly, and patiently resisted the spiteful attacks of the irritable East-wind, occasionally giving utterance to a suppressed groan as one or the other of his rheumatic limbs felt a sudden twinge.

The East-wind gave expression to a cynical laugh as these half-smothered exclamations reached his ears. "I have succeeded in touching you at last, my aged friend, have I? Your philosophy is not wholly proof against bodily pain, is it?"

"Bodily pain is easier to bear than men-

tal," replied the old tree. "I would rather bear all the pain you can inflict on my poor old body than carry under my rough bark such a nature as yours."

"'It 's an ill wind that blows nobody any good,'" replied the East-wind, in his sharp, unsympathetic voice. "Now I always think the worst of people, and then I am not disappointed in them."

"What a dreadful creature!" cried the white Birch, with a shudder.

For answer, the East-wind blew one of his strongest blasts at the slender white Birch; but she allowed it to toss her graceful branches about at will, and her silvery peals of laughter rang joyously out.

"There 's freshness for you!" she exclaimed, as soon as she recovered her breath; for she knew that nothing would so annoy the irritable East-wind as to find he could not make everybody as uncomfortable as he himself was.

"Hoyden!" sneered the Fir-tree. "I think it would be much more becoming in you to keep your branches where they belong, instead of flaunting them about so boisterously. Nature, I presume, intended them to screen your lank proportions."

"I doubt that," replied the white Birch, gayly. "Why did she make them so lithe and long, if she did n't mean that I should exercise them?" and she executed so many gambols with her supple boughs that the fir-tree looked another way in confusion too great for words.

The East-wind seized this moment to vent all the power of his lungs on the Fir-tree.

"How dare you, sir?" she exclaimed angrily, trying to keep in position her scraggy branches.

"Don't mind us!" replied the old Oak; "we are all old friends here, and should know the ways of the east wind by this time."

"It is monstrous behavior," exclaimed the Fir-tree, her cracked voice trembling with indignation. "It is very well for you, sir, to say we are all old friends here; but your sight is not so good as it once was, my friend, and does not extend above the clouds where those mischievous stars have been staring down all night and enjoying my discomfiture. Some of them, too, are undiscovered planets, and one does n't know what to expect of them. Why, my mother came over in the 'Mayflower,' and do you think it the correct thing for one of her offshoots to submit to the curious gaze of such obscure persons?"

"Don't give yourself any uneasiness, dear Miss Fir-tree," called out a voice from high above them; "we were all much too busy last night, I can assure you, to waste any time in trying to embarrass you."

"It is that mischievous Mercury. I

know his voice," said the Fir-tree in a low tone, "although the clouds hide his face."

"What was it that kept you so busy, pray?" called out the Fir-tree after a pause, for the monotonous life in the woods made her curious to know what was going on in the big world.

"We were watching the poor little lame girl in the village," replied the far-off voice. "She had a painful night, and could n't sleep, so we amused her by shining in at her window. The dear child watched us all night, till the disagreeable East-wind came and blew so many clouds about that she lost sight of us. Fortunately the West-wind will soon be here."

CHAPTER II.

"WILL the West-wind soon be here, though?" sneered the East-wind; and he flew into such a rage that he rushed blindly about, looking for some object to vent his spite on. Seeing the three children coming towards the old Oak, he gathered himself up for a great effort and rushed violently upon them, almost knocking them over as he struck them.

"What a horrible wind!" exclaimed Fred, holding his hat on with both hands. "I wish I had stayed in the house."

"So do I," replied Kate, bringing the elastic of her hat under her chin to hold it more securely in place. "Let 's go back and play in the house! We can't have any fun out here while this horrid old East-wind is blowing."

Edmund took off his hat, and allowed the wind to toss his hair about, breathing deep breaths, and looking as if he enjoyed it.

"You don't mean to say that you like this hateful wind?" said Kate, looking at her cousin in surprise.

"Why should n't I?" he answered. "It is fresh and pure, and in its way as good as the West-wind you are so fond of."

"It is cold and harsh," replied Kate, with a shudder, "and everything is gray and gloomy. When the sun is out, all is bright and cheerful."

"We can't have sunshine always," said Edmund, thoughtfully; "we should become tired of the brilliant light."

"What nonsense you talk!" exclaimed Fred, impatiently. "Come, Kate, let 's go back to the house and have a game of Parchesi till school-time, and Ed can stay here and enjoy his dear East-wind;" and

away ran the children, leaving Edmund standing alone under the oak-tree.

He looked at the forest-trees, their outlines standing boldly out from their background of soft gray clouds. Not a human being was in sight, not a sound heard but the voices of Nature that speak to an artistic temperament.

"Am I so different from others?" said the boy to himself. "They tell me I am, and I know they think I shall never amount to anything. I can never be a business man as they say Fred will, but there must be something for me to do in this big world. Is n't it as much to paint a picture or compose music as it is to be a great merchant?"

"Much more," rustled the old Oak, softly.

"A thousand times more," quivered the white Birch.

"Far more," creaked the Fir-tree, warmly,

mindful that the boy had praised her artistic outlines.

"Follow the dictates of your nature," rustled the old Oak again. "You have an appreciation of Nature that finds the beautiful in everything. Listen to the voice that speaks within you, and it will lead you to great things."

"It is hard to be misunderstood," said the boy to himself, — "hard to be told you are silly and talk nonsense, just because you say things different from other persons. Fred always gives satisfaction, and they say he will be a great man. I can never be like him."

"Have patience," rustled the old Oak in reply, "and all will come right in the end. Each one finds his place in the world, and some day you will prove to them that you have something in you that *they* cannot understand."

"My mother knew what was in me,"

said the boy, "and I will show them that she was right."

He stood looking about him with a happy expression on his face. The East-wind, in a softened mood, played gently in his wavy brown hair, and caressed his smooth cheeks. His face was bright with the thoughts that the comforting rustle of the old tree had awakened in him, and energy and will-power looked out of his dark eyes. He roamed about, his eyes taking in every picturesque group of trees and rocks.

"It must be school-time," he exclaimed aloud at last. "Dear me! I am afraid I shall be late again!"

The East-wind, for once in his life, felt a generous impulse towards the only human being who had felt a liking for him, and sent a vigorous puff after him as he started off on a run in the direction of the schoolhouse.

Edmund soon reached the little school-

house where he and his cousins were sent. The standard of education was not high in the town; and Mr. Merton, a practical business man who had made his own way in the world, opposed his wife's wish to have a governess with the argument that what was good enough for him was good enough for his children; and she was obliged to submit to his prejudices, and be satisfied with the acquisition of a "little knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic" that her husband considered essential for a practical education.

School was in session when Edmund arrived and hurried to his seat with cheeks glowing from his run. The teacher, Miss Stone, — a tall, gaunt woman of middle age, chosen more for her muscular ability to enforce discipline than for any intellectual requirements, — was walking the little platform with her hands folded behind her, and an unusually hard expression on her

grim countenance. As Edmund took his seat, she paused in her walk and fastened her cold gray eyes on him without speaking.

Dead silence reigned throughout the little room, as the girls on their side of the school-room and the boys on theirs gazed in speechless expectation from the teacher to Edmund, who, somewhat embarrassed under his teacher's steady gaze, took a book from his desk and fastened his eyes on one of the pages.

"Edmund Merton," began Miss Stone at last, "arise!"

Edmund closed his book and rose to his feet.

"Regard me, Edmund Merton!" continued the teacher.

Edmund raised his eyes, as directed; but meeting the cold gaze of the hard gray eyes, he glanced at the faces about him, taking in the sympathetic look on his cousin Kate's

face, and the amused expression on the faces of many of the older boys, detecting in them the pleasure they anticipated in the fact that their teacher had started off on one of the moral lectures she was so fond of delivering, and the probability that it would last over the hour of the hard arithmetic lesson.

"Your conduct is atrocious, Edmund Merton," continued his teacher. "I have a letter in my desk," bringing her hand hard on the desk beside her, "in which I have expressed to your uncle the dissatisfaction I have experienced in your conduct. My opinion is, as I have stated in the letter, that you will be a dunce. You spend your time, as I have told your uncle, in scribbling senseless pictures when you should be attending to your studies, and appear late at school when there is no reason why you should not be here as punctually as your cousins are. What have

you to say in extenuation of your conduct, Edmund Merton?" and as Miss Stone finished, she folded her hands behind her back and gazed fixedly at her delinquent pupil.

A knock was heard at the door.

"Mary Jane Eastman, attend to the door!" said the teacher.

Mary Jane opened the door, and in walked a tall lady in black, followed by three others in black; and without a word the four black-robed figures passed in single file up the aisle, and ascending the platform, seated themselves on chairs that were arranged against the wall.

The eldest lady, the one who had entered first, raised her black veil; and the three others followed her example. Then her eyes wandered over the faces of the bewildered scholars, until they rested on Edmund's face; and there they stopped, regarding the boy with a severe expression.

The eyes of the other three also wandered about the room, until they in turn rested on Edmund, whom they likewise regarded with the same severe expression. After a few moments of silence, the eldest lady gave a short cough, expressive of displeasure. The other three also gave a cough, expressive of displeasure.

On the entrance of the four silent visitors, Miss Stone had transferred her gaze from Edmund to them, and looked at each in turn.

"May I ask to what I owe the pleasure of this visit?" she asked after a while, as her visitors showed no disposition to break the silence.

"You may so," replied the eldest of the party. "Me and my daughters has come to enter complaint against one of your scholars here; and a more impertinent youngster I never see in my life."

The teacher's eye brightened. Here was

a case that would bring into play her unusual powers of eloquence.

"State your case, if you please," she answered with alacrity, "and I will sift the matter to the bottom."

"It is pretty well sifted already," replied the lady, "and I know what I am talking about. To cut matters short, Ed Merton there said to the boy of a intimate friend of mine that me and my daughters reminded him of black beetles. Then, later on, he said to the same boy that my daughter, Ann Eliza here," designating with a motion of the head and hand the lady next her, "did n't know nothing about paintin'. He said as how she bought a pot of green paint and made them pictures that hang up in our front room. Now, I want to ask, is that the way to talk about a young lady that's had a quarter's lessons over to the seminary in Smithtown?"

"No, I should say that it was not," re-

plied Miss Stone, fixing her cold eye on the delinquent.

"Now, to come to the worst," continued the eldest lady in black. She paused a moment to give effect to her words, and said, in a deep, strong voice, "He said as how Ann Eliza did n't know enough to paint their barn-door."

A subdued titter ran around the school-room; but it was suddenly checked, as the teacher, bringing her closed hand on her desk with a force that made it ring, remarked in a loud voice, —

"Silence, all! I will have justice done! Edmund Merton, you hear of what you have been accused? You shall make to this injured lady all the reparation that is in your power. You shall ask her to forgive you for your sinful words, and afterwards you shall ask pardon of the lads in the school and then of the lassies."

Dead silence followed these words. Ed-

mund's color deepened, and his head was thrown back somewhat farther than usual; but there was no indication of fear or submission.

"First, bow to the lady and ask her forgiveness," said the teacher, standing with her arms folded behind her and her thin lips tightly compressed.

Still Edmund made no move towards the injured lady.

"It 's no more than right he should take back his words," said Ann Eliza, who had not spoken before.

"I *will* take them back," said Edmund, with a roguish twinkle in his brown eyes; "she *is* fit to paint our barn-door."

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT *is* going on, I should like to know?" exclaimed the white Birch, impatiently, the next day. "The West-wind has been back and forth between the house and the old Oak all the morning, and they speak in such low tones I can't hear a word. What can it be, I wonder? Do *you* know anything about it?" she asked of the Brook.

The Brook braced himself against a large stone in order to steady himself. "Do I know anything about what?" he asked.

"About what is going on," replied the white Birch. "There is some secret between the West-wind and the old Oak; and it concerns the family at the house, I know, because I heard their names mentioned."

"You are right," replied the Brook, mysteriously; "there *is* a secret, and I am in it."

"What is it?" cried the white Birch, eagerly, bending forward to listen.

"If I should tell you, it would be no longer a secret," whispered the Brook; and he started off at a rapid pace towards the ocean, whither he was always hastening.

"Impertinent fellow!" exclaimed the white Birch, angrily, as she gave him a parting thrust with her long branches.

"What can one expect of such a vagrant?" remarked the Fir-tree. "I wonder at your indiscretion in conversing at all with him."

"Oh, I am not so dreadfully particular as all that," replied the white Birch; "your awfully proper people are very tiresome to me. I must say I prefer those who have seen something of the world."

"I should expect just such opinions from you," replied the Fir-tree. "It *used* to be

the custom for those who are just budding out to form their opinions from their elders; but *now* each bud has her own opinion before she is fairly out."

"That talk about buds coming out is so silly!" exclaimed the white Birch, pettishly. "*I* am determined not to ask anybody's advice about coming out, but when I want to come out I shall come."

"I should say you were pretty well out already," replied the Fir-tree, in a sarcastic tone that was very irritating to the nerves of the white Birch.

"And what is more to the purpose," continued the white Birch, pertly, "I mean to *stay* out."

"Oh, do go away!" exclaimed the Fir-tree, pettishly, as a sparrow lighted on one of her boughs for a moment, and gave one of her buds a peck.

"Why, that is Sparrow, the Tramp," cried the white Birch.

"I know that, and I don't care to have such a common, roving fellow light on *my* boughs. I would n't mind a bluebird, or a robin, or any bird of refinement, stopping for a moment to rest; but such a common fellow as the sparrow!" replied the Fir-tree, indignantly.

"He shall light on me as often as he likes," said the white Birch, warmly. "Besides, he has reformed, and takes good care of his family now. See! there he goes with a big worm in his beak to take home to them. I heard him say the other day that he had found two gray feathers in his head! I think he 's real jolly!"

"I should have supposed he would suit your taste!" remarked the Fir-tree, sarcastically.

"What 's the trouble, my dear?" asked the West-wind, suddenly rustling the leaves of the white birch.

"Stop a moment!" called the white

Birch, throwing out her longest branches to detain the West-wind, who never remained still many minutes at a time. "You must tell us what is going on at the house."

"What makes you think there is anything going on there, pray?"

"I know there is, for you have been lurking about there all the morning, and I heard you talking with the old Oak about the family, and I am certain I heard Edmund's name mentioned several times."

"You shall know all in good time," answered the West-wind, "but I really cannot stay just now."

"It is always so," said the white Birch, pettishly; "you are the most restless creature I ever knew, — worse than the Brook, even. The South-wind is much nicer than you are; he is never in a hurry."

"*Au revoir*, my darling," called out the West-wind, blowing several kisses towards

her as he rushed off in the direction of the house.

"I have a great mind to ask the old Oak," said the white Birch to herself. "He is so dignified I am afraid he 'll think I 'm prying, though; but I 'm just as interested in the family as he is. Yes, I will ask him."

Now that the white Birch had made up her mind to question the old Oak, she was somewhat at a loss how to begin; so she rustled her leaves noisily to attract his attention.

The old Oak glanced towards the white Birch. She was such a pretty, slender young creature that she was a great favorite; for although beauty of character has more weight in the end than external beauty, still a pleasing exterior is very attractive, and no one is too old to come under its influence.

"Did you speak, my dear?" asked the old Oak, kindly.

"How well and fresh you are looking this morning, dear friend!" began the white Birch, in her most winning tones; "are you feeling as well as you look?"

"Pretty well, thank you; but I 'm growing old, little friend. I 've stood here for a hundred years and more. Why, I was here even before the Revolutionary War. I can remember well the excitement when war was declared,— when Edmund's great-grandfather, a fine young fellow with eyes and complexion like his, enlisted. Then the Mexican war; that was farther off, and did n't make so much stir. Why, it seems only yesterday that the Southern Rebellion was going on. You can remember that, my dear; you were a straight young sapling then. Yes, generations have come and gone since I have stood here. The old fellows will soon have to make room for younger ones."

"But you *are* young, — as young as any

of us, dear friend. Your spirit is young, for you never lecture and moralize as if you never had a youth yourself. I believe some never were young, they have so little sympathy for those who are;" and the white Birch tossed her branches and cast what she intended to be a withering glance at the Fir-tree, who pretended not to see her, and persistently looked in the opposite direction.

"I try to be charitable towards all," replied the old Oak; "for you know we all make mistakes, my dear."

"I hope nothing is wrong at the house," ventured the white Birch, after a pause.

"N–o," answered the old Oak, quietly, "I think not, — nothing that will not right itself in time."

"I knew I was right," said the white Birch to herself, and she waited for the old Oak to continue; but he was provokingly silent.

"I hope Edmund is not seriously ill,"

ventured the white Birch, at random; for the old Oak *must* be drawn out, or she would never arrive at the truth of the matter.

"No, Edmund is not ill," answered the old Oak, in the same calm tones. "The dear boy is very well, as he always is."

"Oh, yes, so he is; I forgot. It is Kate who is ill, is n't it? Or is it Fred?"

"Kate and Fred are both in their usual good health, so far as I know."

"Then what in the world *is* the matter?" burst out the white Birch, impetuously. "*Do* tell me what is going on, for I can't stand this suspense any longer. Why, I love those children so well, have n't I a right to know everything that concerns them?"

The old Oak considered a moment, and then answered calmly, —

"Yes, my dear; I see no reason why you should n't know what I know. I have always been in the habit of keeping things

to myself, I have such a dislike to gossip. My mother used to say to me, 'Don't believe more than half you hear, and don't tell half of that.' So you can readily imagine, my dear, that I have become very reticent. Yes, there can be no harm in your knowing what is going on. The West-wind, who is always pretty wide awake, has been telling me this story. Can you hear me, madam?" asked the old Oak of the Fir-tree, with old-time gallantry.

"Perfectly," replied the Fir-tree, gratified to be treated with so much consideration.

"You must know," began the old Oak, "that Edmund has gotten into trouble at school."

"That is nothing new," said the white Birch, gayly; "he is always in trouble there."

"This time," continued the old Oak, "the trouble is a serious one. He has been accused of making unkind remarks about a

certain family in town, and his teacher has informed his uncle of the fact, and he insists on the boy's making an apology. Now Edmund says he did not make the remarks of which he is accused, and Kate and Fred say he did not; but his uncle is very indignant about the affair, and chooses to believe the account of the teacher."

At this moment the West-wind came hurriedly along.

"Outrageous!" he exclaimed excitedly; "his uncle still prefers to believe the teacher, and she has always been prejudiced against the boy. Kate and Fred refused to take the note home, and she sent it by two of the large boys. Half-a-dozen others went too, hoping to see some fun."

"Do you mean to say that Edmund's uncle doubts his word, when he knows he never told a lie in his life?" exclaimed the white Birch, indignantly.

"Yes; but his aunt takes his part. His

uncle, you know, is never satisfied with him, because he does n't take to arithmetic as he thinks he ought to."

"The poor boy feels very unhappy, I presume," remarked the Fir-tree.

"Yes, he is dreadfully cut up about it, but he is too proud to let them see it."

"Will he apologize?" asked the white Birch.

"Apologize for what he did n't do? Not he! He has made a mistake, though, for which I am sorry, as it only tends to complicate matters."

"What is that?" asked his listeners at once.

"You see they accused him of saying that Ann Eliza Partridge was n't fit to paint their barn-door. He did n't really say it; but his love of fun got the better of his judgment, and when she said he ought to take back his words, he said he *would* take them back, — she *was* fit to paint their barn-door."

At these words the Brook, who had been flowing quietly along in order to listen, here tittered audibly, and the trees rustled their leaves noisily.

"Here he comes!" exclaimed the West-wind; "you can judge for yourselves of his state of mind."

The West-wind sped rapidly towards the woodland, whistling softly to himself as he went; the old limbs of the Oak creaked and groaned as he moved them uneasily about; the white Birch swayed and rustled until her silvery leaves quivered in the sunlight, and the stately Fir-tree sighed deeply.

The Fir-tree did certainly look uncommonly well a few mornings later, for a light shower had freshened her dry foliage, and the softened light was more becoming to her than bright sunshine. Moreover, she was in a cheerful mood, and that was the best of all.

"What can be about to happen? The Fir-tree is in an amiable mood, and has spent at least an hour arranging her stiff needles," remarked the white Birch, in an undertone to the Brook.

"Don't you know? The South-wind is coming," whispered back the Brook.

"What has that to do with it, pray?"

"Did n't you know he is a great favorite of hers, and she thinks he returns her admiration? My opinion is that it is too much trouble for him to be fond of anybody but himself," answered the Brook.

"Well, that is a joke!" laughed the white Birch, till every silver leaf quivered.

"What is the fun between you two?" asked the Fir-tree, good-naturedly. "It is not fair to keep it all to yourselves. Let others enjoy it too."

At this, the white Birch laughed louder than ever, the brook tittered audibly, and even the old Oak-tree, infected by their

young spirits, rustled his leaves in gentle response, although he had not the faintest idea of the cause for merriment.

The Fir-tree made a feeble attempt to join in the mirth; but it was not done with a good grace, for she suspected the mischievous white Birch and the unreliable Brook, and had a secret misgiving that she herself might be connected with their merriment.

All at once the Fir-tree shook her foliage into a more becoming attitude, and sighed softly several times.

"The South-wind is here," whispered the Brook to the white Birch, as a soft breeze rippled his smooth surface; "observe her!"

The Fir-tree greeted the South-wind with smiles, breathing soft sighs as she gazed admiringly on him, and trying to sway her stiff boughs in the graceful manner the white Birch did; but her awkward branches

did not bend as she fancied they would, and a shower of dry needles fell to the ground.

The white Birch burst into a laugh once more, and became so convulsed with merriment that her slender form rocked until her long branches dipped recklessly into the brook; and when she recovered herself sufficiently to raise them again into their proper position, they were dripping with water.

"Wet as a drowned rat!" exclaimed the Fir-tree, with an expression of disgust, as the white Birch shook herself; "don't drip on *me*, if you please."

"By no means," replied the white Birch, managing with another shake to send a shower of drops in the direction of the Fir-tree.

"What is all this about?" asked the South-wind, in his indolent tones. "Don't quarrel, for I have something to tell you."

"What is it?" cried the white Birch, eagerly, her desire to tease the Fir-tree quickly vanishing.

The Fir-tree too, at the words of the South-wind, forgot to resent her injuries; and the lively Brook even stopped to listen.

CHAPTER IV.

"AS I was on my way here," began the South-wind, in his usual moderate tones, "I met the East-wind; and as soon as I saw him coming, I knew that something had happened to disturb him, for he was greatly excited, and muttered angrily to himself. 'What 's the matter?' I called out as he rushed by me. 'Matter enough!' he answered fiercely; 'I have just now learned the most outrageous news!' and when he became a little calmer, he told me the following story: He was passing over a farm in the eastern part of Maine, when he heard a familiar name mentioned, and he stopped to listen. The farmer and his wife were talking about Edmund Merton. You know Edmund is a great favorite with the East-wind. I believe the boy is

the only human being he loves, and you can imagine the state of his mind when he learned that Edmund Merton, that boy so full of talent, who appreciates so fully all of us, is to be sent to live on that farm with that man and his wife, whose souls cannot appreciate anything beyond their potatoes and cabbages!"

"Dreadful!" exclaimed the white Birch, as her foliage rustled with indignation.

The old Oak uttered a groan of despair, and the Brook gave vent to his feelings by dashing himself violently against the bank and sending spray high into the air.

The old Oak was the first to recover himself. "Why is this done?" he asked, in a voice that was unsteady with emotion.

"His uncle despairs of making him practical, and thinks by placing him on this farm he can stop his dreaming and drawing, and put something useful in their place," replied the South-wind.

"In other words, he will crush out the love of the beautiful that God has given him, and mould his nature to suit himself," said the old Oak, sadly.

"And is it possible his aunt approves of this plan?" asked the white Birch, indignantly. "She is so fond of him, and has always taken his part so generously when they have found fault with him for making pictures! How can she approve of such an unjust arrangement?"

"She does not approve of it," replied the South-wind. "She has used every argument in her power to induce her husband to alter his determination, so the East-wind told me, but you know how obdurate Mr. Merton is when his mind is made up."

"Then there is nothing for us to do but make up our minds to part with the dear boy," said the old Oak, with a sigh.

A puff of fresh air suddenly appeared, setting every leaf in motion, and ruffling

the surface of the brook. The South-wind started up. "Here comes the East-wind!" he exclaimed, "I must be going;" and he slowly disappeared, as the East-wind came blustering up.

"Isn't this a pretty state of things!" exclaimed the East-wind, excitedly.

"It is very sad," replied the old Oak, sorrowfully.

"Well, what do you propose to do about it?" demanded the impatient East-wind.

"I can do little," replied the old Oak, "but watch over him and sympathize with him."

"How can any of us help him, pray, rooted to the spot as we are?" asked the white Birch.

"You and I, my dear, cannot do much, it is true," replied the old Oak; "but others can. Cannot the East-wind visit him, and cannot the Moon and Stars watch over him at all times, and bring us tidings?"

"That is true," replied the white Birch; "but think of his aunt and his cousins, who are so fond of him. *They* cannot understand us when we try to comfort them; and they love him so dearly! But here come the children; they will be sure to talk about Edmund's going away."

The three children came slowly towards the old Oak; Edmund between them, holding a hand of each of his cousins.

"This is the last time you will see our dear old Oak-tree for ever so long," said Kate sadly, as they stood under its spreading branches. "I declare, it's the meanest thing I ever heard of. You *sha'n't* go, there!" and she stamped her foot violently, and winked very hard to keep back the tears.

"I tell you what," said Fred, decidedly, "we 'll save up all our pocket-money and spend our vacation with you next summer, won't we, Kate?"

"Yes," answered Kate; "indeed we will."

"Good-by, dear old tree!" said Edmund, throwing his arms about the rugged tree and laying his cheek caressingly against it. "If I never see you again, I shall always remember you; and when I am a man, if they have not cut you down I will build steps about you, and plant vines to twine around you and make you beautiful. And if they do cut you down, I shall still remember you, and make pictures of you; so you see you can never be forgotten."

"We shall write to you very often," said Kate, "and tell you everything we do."

"And I'll make pictures of the farm and send them in my letters, so you will know how everything looks there," replied Edmund.

"I wish I could draw too," said Kate, "and then I would make pictures of the

old oak and the brook and the white birch and the old fir-tree; but as I can't draw, writing is the next best thing."

"I shall never forget any of them," said Edmund. "When I am homesick I shall make pictures of them and of all of you, and I shall almost be able to imagine myself at home."

"Children," called Mr. Merton from the lawn, "it is time for Edmund to get ready. The train leaves in half an hour."

"Does it?" cried the East-wind, in a great rage. "The train may leave in half an hour; but Edmund shall not, if it's only to prevent you from having your way for once in your life, you hard man, you!"

"That's right," exclaimed the white Birch, her boughs rocking to and fro in her excitement, as the East-wind dashed by, setting the brook foaming and leaping, and speeding towards some black clouds

"He was answered by a heavy peal of thunder from the black clouds, followed immediately by a sharp flash of lightning." — *Page* 59.

in the west that had been silently gathering there.

Up came the black clouds, driven before the angry East-wind, and growing blacker and blacker, until they stood directly overhead, giving sullen answers to the impetuous East-wind.

"There 's thunder and lightning in those clouds," called out Mr. Merton to the leisurely advancing children; "hurry home before the rain comes!"

He was answered by a heavy peal of thunder from the black clouds, followed immediately by a sharp flash of lightning; and as the children reached the house, down came the rain in torrents.

"The heaviest thunder-storm we have had this season," said Mr. Merton, as peal after peal broke over the house, and the brilliant lightning flashed before their eyes. "It is too severe a storm to take a horse out in; and if it does n't sub-

side soon, Edmund will not get away till to-morrow."

The storm did *not* subside until the train was well on its way towards the north-east. Kate and her brother, starting as the heaviest peals crashed overhead, remained in the darkest corner of the room, covering their eyes with their hands as the sharp flashes blinded them; but their cousin, standing at the open window, watched fearlessly the black clouds sending forth their angry defiance to the East-wind, his dark eyes glowing with pleasure as the wind blew about his wavy brown hair and caressed his smooth cheeks.

The morning after the thunder-storm was bright and fresh; the east-wind had given place to a clear west-wind, and as soon as breakfast was over, Edmund went to take farewell of the old familiar scenes he was so soon to leave.

He climbed to his favorite seat among

the branches of the old Oak, and sat there long, gazing into the woodland beyond and dreaming of the unknown life that lay before him. The West-wind played gently among the leaves of the old Oak, rustling them softly, and breathed lightly on the face of the young dreamer. The Brook rippled softly by, and the white Birch rocked her long branches soothingly in the light breeze, while the Fir-tree sighed an accompaniment. Abandoning himself to these influences, the boy dreamed on, until by degrees the murmur resolved itself into voices.

"Where you go, I will follow," the West-wind seemed to say, "and I will bring you the odors of the woods you love so well; surely that will seem like messages from home."

"Messages from home," the white Birch seemed to murmur, as the breeze gently swayed her long boughs.

"Messages from home," sighed the Fir-tree, softly.

"Be true to yourself," the old Oak seemed to rustle, "that your old friends may be proud of you. The sky is not always clear, — clouds and storms are needed as well as sunshine; try to find beauty in them as well. Nature has given you that love of the beautiful to lead you to higher things; never lose sight of it, — it will help you over many a dark way."

"I never will," said the boy, in reply; "I will try to see some good in everything."

Dwelling on these comforting thoughts, the boy sat there until his cousins came to find him.

Edmund's aunt and cousins took a sad farewell of him that afternoon; and as he drove down the avenue by his uncle's side, he struggled manfully to keep in subjection the grief that swelled in his

throat and moistened his eyes. The West-wind, true to his promise, accompanied him, and seemed to breathe encouragingly on his hot cheeks, and rushing along by the Brook, rippled its smooth surface, causing it to murmur cheerfully at him as he passed; then again, darting in among the forest-trees, it swayed the long branches of the white Birch, rustled the leaves of the old Oak, and sang through the boughs of the Fir-tree, sounding like cheery voices bidding him be brave and hopeful.

So soothing were these voices to the unhappy boy, that by the time the depot was reached he could bid his uncle good-by with a steady voice.

"Don't give way to any nonsense, my boy," was his uncle's parting advice, "but stick to work. I never yet saw a boy that fooled away his time making pictures and such senseless trash, turn out a sensible business-man. When you feel in-

clined to indulge in such nonsense, just take a pencil and go to ciphering for a while. That 'll take the nonsense out of your head, and you 'll be doing something useful into the bargain."

Edmund promised to do his best, and stepped on board the train that was to take him far from the only home he had ever known.

The journey was not devoid of interest to the young traveller. As the train whirled by forests and open fields, he seemed to recognize familiar forms, — now imagining he caught a glimpse of the slender white birch, or the old oak, or the prim fir-tree.

The West-wind still followed the train ; and the thought of this faithful friend keeping by his side was a comforting one.

By noon the next day, the cars stopped at the station where Edmund's journey ended, and he stepped on the platform of the little station and looked anxiously

about him. A stage-driver who was standing near approached, saying, "Be you the boy that 's going over to old man Kimball's?"

"Yes, sir," replied Edmund, relieved to find somebody on the lookout for him.

"Well, then, sonny, I 'll take you 'long."

Edmund was soon seated on the box of the stage by the driver, with his trunk stowed safely on behind. The day was fine, the soft west-wind gently blowing; and these combined with the motion of the stage did not fail to produce an exhilarating effect on the boy's susceptible nature, filling him with hope and courage. The driver was sociable, as a true stage-driver always is, and the two chatted like old friends. The drive was a long one; and once, when they stopped to water the horses, Edmund took a block of paper from his pocket and resorted to his favorite amusement. When the stage started

again, the driver looked on the paper and exclaimed, —

"Well, if you ain't got the black mare down there as nat'ral as life, — and old Jake too, — and the stage, and all! Well, I never!" he continued, as Edmund gave the finishing touches to the figure holding the reins; "there I be, old hat and all!"

Edmund finished his sketch and began another, the stage-driver looking on in open-mouthed astonishment.

"What in the world be you cal'lating to do down to old man Kimball's?" he asked at last.

"I'm going to pass the summer there," replied Edmund, with some embarrassment.

"He 's a relative of yourn, I expect?" asked the stage-driver.

"N–o, not exactly," answered Edmund, evasively.

CHAPTER V.

THE stage-driver hesitated to question the boy further, but he was curious to learn the reason for this visit that seemed to him so out of place. After a pause he continued, —

"Ever been this way before, sonny?"

"No, sir," replied Edmund.

"Your father 's well acquainted with old man Kimball, I s'pose?"

Edmund saw it was of no use to evade the good-natured driver's cross-questioning any longer, and, always truthful, thought it best to satisfy his curiosity at once.

"My father is dead, and I live with my uncle," he said simply. He hesitated a moment, and the color rose to his cheeks as he continued: "You see my uncle

wants to make a business man of me, and does n't like to have me spend my time making pictures; and he thought — so he sent me down here."

"Now it seems to me, sonny," said the stage-driver, "that if them pictures you 've jest made is samples of what you can do, your uncle 'd better put you to some business where you could work your talent in, — like a printer, or a daguerreotype business, for instance."

"That 's just what he does n't want," replied Edmund, sadly; "he means to make a business man of me."

"There 's more 'n one kind of business," said the stage-driver, hopefully; "and it stands to reason you 'd do best in what 's in your line. Well, here we be at old man Kimball's!"

The stage drew up before an unpainted wooden house, black with age. A small patch in front of the house — once a gar-

den, but long neglected — was fenced off by itself; tall, rank grass was growing among a few straggling tiger-lilies and peonies. A gravel-walk, overgrown with weeds and grass, led up to the front door, that evidently had not been opened for many years.

An old man who had been standing at the back door came around to the large gate that opened on one side of the garden-patch, as the stage drove up.

As Edmund glanced at the old man with whom his home was to be for some months, his heart sank as he met a pair of cold gray eyes and a hard face without a touch of the softness that makes old age attractive. Perhaps the kind-hearted stage-driver saw the look of disappointment that came into the boy's sensitive face, for he said in a low tone, as he wound the reins around the whip, before he descended to take off the little trunk, —

"If the old man uses you rough, sonny,

you jest let me know. I pass this way every day, and I 'll stand a friend to you."

"Thank you, sir," replied Edmund, warmly. "I 'll remember it."

Edmund and the farmer took the little trunk around to the back door, — Edmund turning to watch the departing stage, and answering the driver's salute before he passed out of sight, feeling as if his last friend had deserted him.

The farmer's wife, busy in the kitchen, merely glanced at him as he passed through, and continued her work; but her face told the boy that he could expect no more sympathy from her than from her husband.

"You may as well go up to your bedroom and put on your old clothes; these ain't fit to work in," said the old man, in a voice that corresponded with his hard face.

The room Edmund was to occupy was a large attic that extended the length of the

house. The walls were not even plastered, and the rough boards and beams gave it a cheerless look. There was a window at each end, and a low bed with a patchwork quilt stood in one corner.

"You 'd better keep your window shut nights," said the farmer, as he left the room, "if you 're afraid of bats. The old woman cleared out the bats' nests last week, and if you keep your windows shut you won't be bothered by 'em."

After Edmund had changed his clothes, the farmer took him to the potato-field, gave him a hoe, and told him he expected him to keep the weeds out.

Unhappy and homesick as the boy was, he kept diligently at work, until all at once a puff of fresh air reached him, and looking in the direction whence it came, he saw in the distance the blue ocean, and heard the surf breaking against the shore.

"I know you," the Ocean seemed to say

to him; "I know all about you from the little brook that flows through your uncle's farm, and I will bring you fresh breezes from there; so don't feel sad."

As Edmund listened, his heart grew lighter, and he worked more cheerfully, longing for night to come, that he might go to his attic and write the letter he had promised to send to his cousins.

After supper he was sent to bring the cows from pasture, and the farmer showed him how to milk; and by the time his work was over, it was so late that when the tired boy reached his attic, he could hardly see to write. He could not have a light, the woman told him, for fear of fire; and she advised him to go at once to bed, for he would be called early in the morning.

Edmund threw open the window, for the air in the room was hot and stifling, and taking his paper and pen to the window,

sat down to write. After a few minutes he could not see the lines; but all at once out came the Moon. "I will help you," she seemed to say; "I will give you all the light I can, although these dark clouds are doing their best to stop it."

Edmund kept on writing; the clouds meanwhile trying to hide the moon, and the moon doing her best to shine through them. At times it grew so dark that Edmund was obliged to stop, and then the moon suddenly shone out and he could see once more. Contending with these difficulties, it was late before the letter was finished and sealed and directed, and then the lonely boy undressed and went to bed.

A bat flew in at the open window and fluttered noiselessly about in the large attic, and it was company for the homesick boy. "I should n't wonder if that were the bat 'Flipwing' I've heard of," said

Edmund to himself; "at all events I'm glad of his company, and I hope he'll stay;" and pleased with the thought, the weary boy was soon asleep.

Edmund was called early the next morning, and he helped milk the cows and afterwards drove them to pasture. Then he harnessed the farmer's horse into the open wagon, and the farmer started for the village, taking Edmund's letter with him.

The drive to the village was a long one; and when the farmer was well on his way and passing through a lonely place in the woods, he took out Edmund's letter, broke it open carefully, and unfolded it. The first thing that met his eyes was a picture of the farm, with himself and his wife, all as natural as life.

"Confound this east-wind," muttered the farmer, as the wind rustled the letter he held in his hand; "it beats all how it's set in jest as I wanted to read this letter.

So the youngster is at it the first thing, is he? Thought he 'd give 'em an idee of the way he found things to old man Kimball's, did n't he? Well, he won't make much out of that job." So saying, he angrily tore the picture in two. At the same moment the East-wind, with an unusually strong gust, caught the pieces, letter and all, out of his hands and carried them over the fence into the woods.

The torn pieces of the picture sailed far away, and disappeared over the tree-tops, but the heavier letter caught on a bush and remained fast.

"'T is n't just the thing for that letter to go flying about the country," said the farmer to himself; "there 's no telling whose hands it might fall into, or what 's in it. I 'd better tear it up, I guess. Whoa, Major!"

The wind now blew higher than ever, and Major was not pleased at the prospect of standing still; so he fidgeted about, the

letter meanwhile floating farther and farther off.

After several minutes spent in inducing Major to stop, the farmer at last dismounted, climbed the fence, and approached the letter, that now rested on the topmost branches of a clump of elderberry-bushes. As he was about to reach up and grasp the letter, a sudden gust of wind seized it and bore it rapidly towards the tall forest-trees. At the same moment Major, who by this time had pawed quite a deep hole in the soft earth, protesting against the delay all the while by impatient shakes of the head, decided to stop no longer; and the same gust that bore away the letter so aggravated him that off he started.

The sound of rattling wheels caught the farmer's attention, and he at once abandoned all thoughts of securing the letter, and followed the horse as rapidly as possible.

Major had no intention of running away,

— he merely did not feel in the mood of standing, or possibly he feared he might take cold remaining still so long in the raw east-wind; so he went at a very moderate gait, and when he heard the farmer running after him and calling to him to stop, he gradually slackened his pace, and finally stood still. By this time the letter was far out of sight, hidden among the thick forest-trees, and the farmer continued his way to the village.

Meanwhile life at Edmund's old home went on much the same as usual; but his aunt followed the boy in her thoughts, and longed to be near him to comfort him in the lonely life she knew he must lead. His cousins missed him sadly, and although they had often laughed at the romances his active imagination wove for them, and termed them "Ed's nonsense," they felt that much joy had passed from their lives that they could not supply.

No letter came from Edmund, and they could but wonder at the delay. His aunt feared he was ill; but her husband assured her he had heard of his safe arrival from the farmer. "The man is doing as I told him," said Mr. Merton, —"keeping the boy busy; and that does n't leave him time to write. Work is the only cure, I know, for a boy that has n't any taste for practical things. If anything is to be made of Edmund, that is the only way I know to bring it about."

"If I could only see him and know him to be happy," said his tender-hearted aunt, "I should feel easier about him. He is so sensitive to his surroundings, I am afraid he will be homesick."

"It will do him good to rough it among strangers," replied her husband. "He is too thin-skinned for a boy. If he were my own son, I should do the same."

"Sensitive as he is," replied his wife,

"he is so brave and conscientious, he will make the best of whatever comes to him."

His old friends, the trees and the brook, waited impatiently for news of their favorite.

"What is the matter, pray?" asked the white Birch, a few mornings later, as the Fir-tree turned from her with an expression of extreme disgust on her sharp features.

"If you are not aware of the impropriety of the expression you just now used," replied the Fir-tree, "I should think it time you were set right."

"What expression did I use?" asked the white Birch, with a surprise that was evidently genuine; "I am sure I can't remember saying anything out of the way."

"You said," replied the Fir-tree, after carefully looking about to see that she could not be overheard, and reducing her

voice to a whisper, "that your *limbs* ached from keeping them in one position so long."

"Oh, yes, so I did!" replied the white Birch. "I said my limbs were so stiff that it would be a relief to have the East-wind, or even the rough old North-wind, come and toss us about a little."

"It would sound better, I should say, to refer to your *boughs* or your *branches*," said the Fir-tree, with great dignity of manner.

"So it would," answered the white Birch, demurely; "I will endeavor to remember it in future. I know I am shockingly careless, but, as you often say, it is the spirit of the age. Pray tell me some of your own experiences when you were young like me. I am sure they would be very instructive."

The Fir-tree glanced sharply at the white Birch, to see if she were in earnest; but

the white Birch looked so innocent and demure that it was impossible to doubt her sincerity, and the subject was a favorite one; so, after settling her foliage into a becoming attitude, the Fir-tree began her recital.

CHAPTER VI.

"MY mother has often told me that her youth was passed in a fine forest in England, where, she assured me, the company was very select," said the Fir-tree. "My mother herself was a most stately and imposing tree, and most particular about the deportment of her family. I often wonder what would be her feelings if she could have seen me since, thrown as I have been in such varied company, some of whom she would not even have allowed me to look at!" and the Fir-tree sighed.

"Your mother must have been a delightful tree. I wish I could have known her!" remarked the white Birch, reverently.

"She was; she was English, you know. Well, one day she was taken up by the

roots and tied in a bundle with several others, and put on board a vessel. It was the 'Mayflower;' but I presume you have heard the story, so I will not repeat it."

"I should think I might know it," whispered the white Birch to the Brook, "I have heard it often enough;" and the Brook giggled in reply as he went on his way.

"My mother," continued the Fir-tree, who had not overheard the words the white Birch had whispered to the Brook, "was planted here, and after some years I came to keep her company. The place was then a wilderness; and oh, the contrast to the life she led in England! We have seen Indian settlements about us, and gypsy tribes have camped at our feet. I have seen tree after tree cut down and destroyed, — among them my poor mother."

All at once a gentle breeze swayed the branches of the white Birch, and rippled

the surface of the Brook that had been silently flowing, and rustled the leaves of the old Oak; the Fir-tree sighed softly as it passed over her dry boughs.

"Here comes the West-wind," interrupted the white Birch, joyfully; "I thought we should see him to-day. Have you heard anything of Edmund? Have you seen him lately?"

"Yes," answered the West-wind, "I have seen him, and have not such good news as I should like. Poor boy! it will not do to let this state of things go on much longer. I fear they will succeed in crushing out his talent unless a change is effected."

"They can never do that," said the white Birch, decidedly; "he has too much spirit to submit."

"He will become tired of struggling against fate," replied the West-wind. "Hard work and a joyless life will in the end subdue the most spirited and ambitious."

"But tell us your news!" exclaimed the white Birch, impatiently; "the old Oak must hear it too."

"Certainly I must," replied the old Oak; "anything that concerns Edmund interests me, and I must confess I am greatly troubled about the boy, and have many plans in my old head to aid him."

"We may need your advice before long," replied the West-wind; "but now for my news."

The West-wind then related the story of the lost letter, as told him by the East-wind.

"It 's an ill wind that blows nobody good," said the white Birch, "and the East-wind did a good thing for once in his life. He was always good enough to Edmund, though."

"Who could help loving him?" rustled the Oak-tree, sadly.

While these warm friends had such lov-

ing thoughts for him, the poor boy was living a joyless life with the farmer and his wife.

All day long he worked on the farm, comforted by the sound of the ocean in the distance and the presence of the cheerful West-wind,— longing for night to come, that he might retreat to his attic and draw pictures of the scenes and faces he loved so well. The white birch, the fir-tree, the brook, the old oak with his cousins playing about it, became such a reality as he drew that he almost forgot he was not there in the old familiar places.

One night, looking for his pictures, he could find them nowhere; and to his anxious inquiries the farmer's wife replied that she had burned them up, as she "was n't going to have such trash littering up the house."

The next morning, as she entered the kitchen, her eyes fell on a drawing of her-

self thrusting the pictures into the stove, — a large scroll issuing from her mouth, with the words above mentioned.

Soon after, the farmer sent him to the village with eggs to sell, and he was very glad of a break in the monotony of his life. He sold the eggs, the shopkeeper giving him articles from the store in exchange. As he was leaving the store, he saw a piece of chalk lying on the floor, and picking it up, handed it to the shopkeeper, who told him he might keep it if he liked. Edmund thanked him and put it in his pocket.

Several men were standing on the platform in front of the store, whiling away the time by conversation and taking observations of the passing teams; and among them was an old man who had once been a sailor. His beard and hair were white, and his weather-beaten face was full of strong lines; his red flannel shirt was open at the

throat, giving a picturesque effect; and the thought that he would make a fine picture occurred to Edmund.

The group in front of the store were so busily engaged that they took no notice of the boy, who, taking from his pocket the piece of chalk, began his picture on the side of the store. Just as he was putting the finishing touches to the beard, a small boy came up behind him and looked over his shoulder.

"If that ain't old uncle Abe!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Good gracious! be you a printer?"

The men looked around when they heard this exclamation, and were as much surprised at the picture as the small boy had been, one after another requesting the young artist to make a picture of him. When this was done, he drew a picture of the farmer; and they laughed heartily at it, for he was not a favorite. Edmund had made a long

scroll coming from his mouth, with the words, "Come, boy, slat 'round and do up the chores!"

The next day the farmer had occasion to go to the village, and his attention was at once attracted to the side of the store where Edmund had drawn the portraits. As usual, a group of men were assembled there, and the farmer's curiosity led him to join them.

The likeness of the old sailor first attracted the farmer's curiosity, then he recognized other familiar faces, and at last his eyes fell on his own portrait, with the expression he so frequently used issuing from his lips. It was unnecessary to ask the name of the artist; he knew at once it could be no other than Edmund.

"By jingo! I 'll take that nonsense out of him yet," he muttered angrily. "It 'll be the last pictur he 'll make for one while!"

"Oh, what 's the harm in it?" said one

of the men standing near. "Let the boy have a little fun!"

"His uncle sent him to me to git this nonsense tuk out of him, and I 'm bound to do it," replied the farmer, harshly.

"The boy did n't intend no harm," said another bystander. "Why, see here! he 's made my eyebrow all drawed down by that big scar I got into the war. It don't make me look pretty, but, Lord! what harm does it do? Let him have his fun out of it."

"I 'll take it out of him! I 'll larn him to make game of *me* afore he 's much older," answered the farmer, as he entered the store.

When the farmer reached home, Edmund was at work in the field, unconscious of the trouble that threatened him, and the farmer entered the house. Contrary to his usual custom, he went upstairs, and cautiously entered Edmund's room. Bare and devoid of comfort as the room was, an air of neatness pervaded it. The rough table under

the little looking-glass contained his writing-materials, and pinned under the glass was a picture of his old home.

"There 't is again," muttered the farmer to himself; "I 'll put a stop to it, though!" and taking down the picture on which Edmund had expended so much loving care, he roughly crumpled it and put it in his pocket.

"Where in thunder does the boy keep his box of paints?" said the farmer to himself, as his eyes wandered about the room. They were nowhere in sight, but his eyes fell on a pen-and-ink sketch pinned over the bed.

"Drat the boy, if he don't make picturs with ink too! Well, I 'll stop that."

The inkstand and pen were taken, and the search for the missing paint-box resumed.

Every corner was searched, but nothing like a paint-box appeared. At last the farmer's eyes fell on the little trunk in the corner.

"I was a fool not to have thought of that afore," he muttered to himself.

The trunk was unfastened, and he raised the lid. Everything was in good order, for the boy took pains to keep his clothes in the places his aunt had placed them when she packed his trunk at parting. Yes! there was the paint-box, by the side of his aunt's picture; and the farmer seized it eagerly. Under it was a small block of drawing-paper and a case of pencils. These followed the inkstand and pens.

The farmer was not yet satisfied. His hard, coarse hands pushed aside the various articles in the trunk, and during the search a small purse was brought to light.

"I 'll take that too," said the farmer to himself, "or he 'll be gitting more paint and things. I can't stop it no other way."

As he rose from his stooping position, he struck his head sharply against the low rafter above him, and a small, dark object

fluttered out of the dark corner. He started guiltily; but it was only the little bat who made his home in Edmund's room.

The farmer crept out of the room as a thief might have done, but without one thought of compunction at robbing the lonely boy of his one innocent pastime.

Meanwhile Edmund was at work in the potato-field, with his mind far away on his old home. Visions of the field, with the brook running through it, into which the white birch dipped her silvery branches, — the stiff fir-tree, preserving at all times her stately dignity, and never forgetting to assume a becoming attitude, — and the old oak, every one of whose withered branches he knew and loved so well, and in whose shade he always fancied his cousins at play, — all these pictures rose in his mind and comforted him as he worked. Could practical Fred have accomplished more without the aid of these fancies?

At times came the sense of injustice at the course his uncle had pursued in order to crush out what he felt was the best part of his nature, and at the thought the hot young blood mounted to his face. Then, when angry thoughts filled his mind, a gentle breeze from the west would breathe softly against his heated forehead and soothe the angry thoughts to rest. Or a fresh puff of east-wind from the ocean would rush by him, and breathing in the brisk air, he would say to himself, "I will not despair; I will accomplish something yet;" and he would return to his work with renewed vigor.

That evening the cows were milked earlier than usual, the kindling and wood had been put in the wood-box by the kitchen stove, and although the sun had set, there was still light enough to tempt the boy to spend an hour out of doors. He strolled along the lane, his eyes fixed on the bright

clouds where the sun had disappeared behind the tall forest-trees.

"If I had only brought my paint-box," was his thought as he watched the bright sunset-colors gradually die away and resolve into subdued tints.

Suddenly a thought came to him, and he took from his pocket the piece of chalk the shopkeeper had given him.

He was opposite a low shed where sheep were kept in cold weather, and stepping up to it, he began to sketch rapidly, for daylight was fast going. Taking the farmhouse with the orchard in front for a background, he made a picture of the field and pasture, with the sun setting over the woodland in the distance.

Although a piece of chalk was his only implement, and for a canvas the rough boards of the sheep-shed, that, never painted, had become almost black from exposure to the weather, a strong sketch grew under his

skilful fingers; and as the young artist stepped back to view his picture, the old desire to work for his art alone grew stronger than ever.

So abstracted was he that he had not observed the figure of the farmer approaching; and as he stood lost in thought, the harsh voice of the farmer startled him from his revery, —

"I thought I had tuk all that nonsense out of you; but I 'll do it yet, if it takes me all summer," were the words that roused him from his dreams.

CHAPTER VII.

EDMUND confronted the farmer suddenly, all the resentment he felt for this hard master returning more violently from contrast to the happy mood he had been in while drawing his picture.

"What have I done wrong?" he exclaimed vehemently. "If it is wrong to paint pictures, it is wrong to have beautiful sunsets and skies and trees."

"It is fooling away your time," replied the farmer, taken by surprise by the boy's eager manner. "You won't never amount to anythin' 's long as you spend your time in sech senseless ways."

"Am I taking time that doesn't belong to me?" asked the boy. "I work hard all day, and I have a right to do what I please when my day's work is over."

"No, you hain't," replied the farmer, picking up, as he spoke, the piece of chalk that Edmund had placed on the window-sill of the old shed. "Your uncle told me that he'd made up his mind to make a business man of you, and said as how he'd determined to make you quit this habit of scribbling."

"You can't stop it," said Edmund, hotly. "The pictures are in *me*, and you can't blot them out. I *know* the time will come when I can have my way."

"Don't be so sure of that! I've tuk away your paintin' things, and I guess the picturs will hev to *stay* in you for a spell," said the farmer, with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Do you mean to say you've dared to take away my paint-box?" exclaimed Edmund, violently. "Why, that's stealing!"

"Call it what you please, it's what I've done," replied the farmer as he turned towards the house.

Edmund stood looking after the farmer in indignation that rendered him speechless. So long as this one resource of drawing remained to him, he could bear his hard lot; but now that this consolation was denied him, he felt utterly abandoned. Harder thoughts than he had ever known came rushing through his excited brain, as he felt this last injustice was greater than he could bear.

Long the boy stood in the spot where the farmer had left him, struggling to keep back the rebellious thoughts that came so fast and strong; realizing, as he had never done before, how completely he was in the power of this hard, unfeeling man.

By degrees he became conscious of a gentle breeze that breathed over his heated face and seemed to caress his cheeks. "I am still with you," the West-wind seemed to say, "I will not leave you. Try to be patient, and all will come right at last."

The sound of the surf breaking against the rocks fell on his ears like the voice of an old friend who would say, "Remember that we hear, from the Brook, of your old home; your friends there have not forgotten you." Then the parting words of the old Oak rose to his mind.

"These are the clouds," he said to himself; "I will try to be patient till sunshine comes."

He turned and walked rapidly back to his lonely attic, and sat long after daylight had died away, looking out at the sky lighted by the moon and stars, building many castles in that bright firmament.

While thus occupied, he heard a slight rattling at his door, the key was noiselessly turned in the lock, and the forlorn boy started suddenly from his dreams to find himself a prisoner in his dreary attic.

Edmund lay tossing about on his bed until late into the night, forming many

plans in regard to his future, and changing them as soon as they were made. The injustice and harshness of the farmer, instead of intimidating him, as the farmer imagined it would, roused all the resentment in his nature. At last, worn out with the thoughts that surged through his brain, he fell asleep and was awakened by the opening of the door. Starting up suddenly with the momentary forgetfulness that follows heavy sleep, he saw the farmer at the door; and as he caught sight of him, memory returned, and the events of the evening before rose vividly to his mind.

"I have made up my mind," said the farmer, deliberately, "to settle this business to once. Now, this is a plain statement of the case. You promise to give up this habit you 've fallen into of making picturs, and I 'll let you out; but if you won't, why I 'm resolved to keep you here

on bread and water till you give in. You'd better make up your mind to do as I want you to, for you'll find me *sot*."

"My mind *is* made up," replied Edmund, calmly, as he sat up in bed and looked fearlessly at the hard face of the farmer. "I shall *not* give up making pictures. It's the only comfort I have now, and there's no harm in it."

"You'll repent your bargain when it's too late," said the farmer. "Bread and water, and living alone in this attic with the key turned on you will bring you to terms before long. I'll crush it out yet."

"You *can't* crush it out," replied the boy, resolutely, as his anger rose. "You can't take the blue out of the sky, or stop the birds singing. Even this bare old attic with its rough rafters makes a picture in my mind that *you* can't efface; and you too, with your hard face, standing there

and threatening me! I could draw you from memory if I were an old, old man; and I will do it too. My uncle shall know how unkindly you have treated me."

"You won't make much headway there, I guess, young man. Your uncle sent you here a purpose to git this habit of yourn broke up, and I'm bound to do it. If you're sot, you'll find me sot too."

"My uncle never meant for you to treat me so cruelly. He had no idea you would make me work so hard, either; but *that* I don't mind. He was never unkind to me, except in not understanding me, and thinking there is only one way for a man to get along in the world. I shall let him know what a cruel man you are!"

"You will, will you?" said the farmer, stepping up to the bed with his hand raised; but something in the boy's fearless face, as he squared his shoulders and

steadfastly met his gaze, caused him to stop, and his hand fell to his side. To strike the boy was further than he dared go. Not liking to meet the honest brown eyes fastened on his face, he turned and walked to the door.

"Stay here, then, if you like it so well," muttered the farmer, as he went out and turned the key in the lock after him.

The next two days passed heavily, and Edmund spent most of the time in gazing out of the window, where, far over the tall forest-trees, he caught a glimpse of the blue ocean. Once again the farmer had appeared, to ask him if he were ready to "give in;" but with that exception, the farmer was the only human being to whom Edmund had spoken since his imprisonment. Three times a day the farmer's wife unlocked the door and set on the floor just inside the door a piece of dry bread and a pitcher of cold water; but she neither

spoke to him nor looked at him. The little bat that came out every night at twilight and fluttered noiselessly about, was company for him, and he knew just when to look for his coming. A little mouse too, at first timid and suspicious, grew accustomed to his presence, and came boldly out for the crumbs he spread for him.

Thus the first two days of Edmund's imprisonment drew to a close, and in his solitude one of the many thoughts that had come to him gained strength as the time wore on. He would go back to his uncle, and lay the facts of the case before him; and he felt sure his uncle would do justice to him. How to accomplish this — in what way to escape and reach the cars that would take him home — was a question that puzzled him. The farm was five miles from the village, and the depot some miles from there; and he feared the farmer would overtake him before he had gone so far.

He remembered the words of the kind-hearted stage-driver, but he knew it would be impossible to escape recognition if he rode on the stage in broad daylight.

One thing was certain, — he must start as soon as possible after the farmer and his wife were asleep for the night. Money, too, would be needed; but on that score he felt no anxiety, for the purse that his uncle had given him and liberally filled was safely packed away at the bottom of his trunk.

"Why not start this very night?" thought the lonely boy, as the plan matured in his mind.

The sun was setting in the western sky; he judged that it might be five o'clock, and still several hours must elapse before he could carry out his intention. Now that his mind was made up, he became very impatient, and walked the room to pass away the time, frequently going to the

window to see how much lower in the west the sun lay.

Later the key was turned, and the farmer's wife passed in the bread and water and then disappeared. Edmund drank some of the water, but too excited to eat, he took the precaution to put the bread in his pocket.

At last the sun went out of sight behind the forest-trees, and twilight gradually deepened into evening. Edmund heard the farmer locking the doors and windows, and soon silence fell upon the household. Hardly daring to breathe, lest he should break the stillness, Edmund sat motionless by the window, waiting for the farmer and his wife to fall asleep.

When he was sure the right moment had arrived, Edmund rose softly, took the sheets from his bed, tied an end of each securely together in a square knot, and making one end fast to a beam that ran

up by the side of the window, threw the other end outside. As he was about to descend, he remembered his purse and went to his trunk to find it. What was his surprise when no purse was to be found! He had not had occasion to use it since he came to the farm, and had hardly thought of it. Thinking he must have overlooked it, he carefully took out one article of clothing after another until the little trunk was empty, but still no purse.

Completely staggered by this obstacle, the boy sat down on the floor in consternation. Not that he thought of abandoning his project, but the loss of his purse was a serious drawback. He concluded at once that the farmer must have taken it, in order to prevent him from purchasing more drawing-materials.

"I will walk every step of the way," said the determined boy to himself. "It

will take me longer, but I will find my way home if it takes me a year."

Having formed this resolution, he rose to his feet and walked to the window.

Sliding down on the sheets was an easy task for a vigorous boy, and he drew a deep breath of relief when he found himself standing on the ground.

After he had taken a few steps towards the gate, he remembered his paint-box. "I can't go without that," he said to himself. "It is mine; the farmer has no right to it."

He knew just where it was, in the little cupboard behind the kitchen stove; but how to obtain possession of it, with the doors and windows of the house locked, was a serious question. He tried the kitchen windows, hoping one of them might have been carelessly left unfastened, but they were tightly closed.

This second obstacle was not of so seri-

ous a nature as the first, but he was not willing to give up his beloved paint-box without another effort. He remembered a little window in the shed; and if that were unfastened he could climb through it and reach the kitchen in that way, for he knew the door to the kitchen had no lock.

He tried the little window, and to his intense relief, found he could raise it. Going to the wood-pile, he selected a stick of the right length, and raising the window carefully, inserted the stick to keep it in place.

The opening thus made was not large, but with care and some squeezing he forced himself through, and jumped lightly to the floor; but careful as his entrance was, he had not noticed a large wash-tub that was placed on its side directly under the window; and with a clatter that reverberated through the stillness, it rolled across the shed-floor.

The boy stood still, uncertain whether to stay or fly; but after a moment of uncertainty he found that the farmer had not taken alarm, and he cautiously raised the latch of the kitchen door.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE door of the farmer's bedroom that led out of the kitchen stood wide open, and Edmund hesitated, as he stood in the silent kitchen, with the moonlight streaming across the floor. How like a thief's seemed his stealthy footsteps, as he approached the cupboard behind the stove!

"I am only taking what is my right," he said to himself.

A deep-drawn breath from the next room startled him as his hand was on the knob of the cupboard, and he stopped. All was quiet again, and he opened the little door.

Yes, there was his paint-box, and beside it his block of drawing-paper. Seizing both eagerly, he closed the door and cautiously retreated the way he had entered.

Once safely outside, Edmund started on a run, and taking the road that lay to the village, kept rapidly on, sometimes stopping to walk, but most of the time running. Every few moments he looked back over his shoulder, half expecting to see the farmer in pursuit; but he at last reached the village in safety.

So early had the farmer and his wife gone to bed, that it was not more than ten o'clock when Edmund entered the village; but even at that hour nearly every house was dark, for country-people keep early hours.

In what direction the depot lay, was unknown to Edmund. To inquire his way seemed to him a dangerous thing, for his appearance alone at that hour would be sure to excite suspicion. It was the only course, however, for him to pursue; and seeing a light in the rear of a small house, he walked boldly up to the back door and knocked.

While his hand was still on the door it was opened, and a man with a hat on came out, who had evidently just taken his leave. Edmund saw at once that he was a sailor, as also was another man who had accompanied him to the door.

"Well, sonny, what do you want?" asked the man who stood in the doorway, while the other waited, curious to see what the boy could want at that late hour.

"Will you please tell me the way to the railroad station?" asked Edmund.

"Railroad station at this hour?" exclaimed the man. "Why, what in the world do you want to know that for?"

"I want to go there," replied Edmund, beginning to fear that this questioning might lead to trouble.

"I'm blessed if 't ain't the boy that made the picturs," exclaimed the man who stood outside the door.

"You 're right, Cap'n," replied the other.

"What 's the row, sonny? Ain't the old man used you well?"

"No," replied Edmund, feeling that the best thing he could do was to confide in these men, who seemed friendly to him; "he has treated me very unfairly, and I have made up my mind to go back to my uncle and tell him about it."

"Going on the train?"

"No," replied Edmund, resolutely; "I must walk. The farmer took away my money."

"You don't say so! How do you expect to git victuals?"

"I can work my way along," replied Edmund. "I am willing to work in pay for food, and I can sleep out-of-doors."

"Cap'n," said the other in a low tone, as he stepped up to the man who stood outside, "here 's the boy you 've been looking for; he 'll do."

"Yes, he 'll do, Sam," replied the other.

"Sonny," he asked, turning to Edmund, "how would you like to ship 'long of me? We 'll get you to your uncle safe and sound."

"I will go," replied the boy, unhesitatingly, "if you will promise to take me to my uncle's."

"All right, sonny. The voyage is a short one, and when we 're back I 'll take you home."

"Stop a moment!" called out the white Birch to the Brook, as he dashed rapidly along. "Tell me what you are hurrying so for."

"I can't stop," replied the Brook; "I have important news for the Ocean, and there is not a moment to lose;" and the Brook sped on, sending spray high into the air as he leaped over the rocks that lay in his path.

"Strange!" said the white Birch. "He

is angry at something, I know, I don't see why he can't tell me."

"By and by, when I am not in such a hurry," called back the Brook.

"Do you know anything about it?" asked the white Birch of the old Oak.

The old Oak could not give her any information, neither could the Fir-tree; but both of them were of opinion that something unusual must have happened.

"He is a provoking creature, that Brook," said the white Birch; "he likes to keep us in suspense."

At that moment a sharp breeze whistled through the forest, and bowed the tops of the largest trees.

"I know what that means," groaned the old Oak; "my old limbs recognize the first blast of the East-wind."

"He is in a bad humor," replied the white Birch; "but one thing is certain,— he can't keep his secret to himself long.

We shall soon know what it is that annoys him."

On came the East-wind, with puffs of air that seemed fresh from the ocean.

"What is the matter?" called out the white Birch. "What is it that troubles you and the Brook?"

"I don't know anything about the Brook," answered the East-wind, irritably; "I have enough to do without troubling myself about him. I have a piece of news that will astonish you, if I am not mistaken."

"What is it?" cried the white Birch quickly, while the old Oak and the Fir-tree listened attentively.

"What should you say if I were to tell you that Edmund is by this time well out to sea?" said the East-wind.

"What!" exclaimed his three listeners together.

"Out at sea on board a fishing-schooner

bound for the Banks," said the East-wind, watching with satisfaction the effect of his words.

"Do tell us all about it," exclaimed the white Birch, impatiently; "you seem to take delight in keeping us in suspense. Tell us how it came about."

"You know already, for I have told you," said the East-wind, "that Edmund resolved to leave the farmer after he treated him so meanly."

"Yes, and we have n't heard a word since. You told us he was coming home, and we were all so glad to have him back."

"Edmund started," said the East-wind, "to walk home. Poor fellow! the farmer had taken away his money, and there was nothing else for him to do. He stopped to inquire his way at a house in the village, where he fell in with the captain and mate of a fishing-schooner. They were preparing for a cruise to the Banks, and were

on the lookout for a boy to go along; and as Edmund turned up just in time, they took him."

"What will be required of him?" asked the old Oak.

"To do odd jobs," replied the East-wind, "and make himself generally useful. When they reach the fishing-grounds, they will keep him busy baiting hooks and waiting on the fishermen."

"What possessed him to go on such a voyage" asked the white Birch.

"The men promised to take him to his uncle on their return."

"It is a pity the poor boy should be in the hands of such men," remarked the old Oak.

"They are not bad men," replied the East-wind. "They knew if they did n't take him the farmer would be sure to find him, and they will treat him well and bring him home as they promised."

"I am sorry for it," said the old Oak, sadly; "I would much rather he were here."

"So the West-wind thinks," replied the East-wind, "but I don't agree with him. I sent some vigorous puffs after the vessel, and she was well out at sea before the farmer knew the boy was gone. I shall watch over him, never fear! The West-wind tried to stop me, and made an effort to keep the vessel from starting, but I am the stronger and got the better of him."

"The Brook probably knows all about this, and kept it to himself," said the white Birch.

"Of course he does," replied the East-wind; "the Ocean tells him everything."

"He evidently had something to tell the Ocean," said the old Oak; "he was in such a hurry to reach him."

"He said he would tell us later," remarked the white Birch.

"I can tell you all about it," said a voice from far above them.

"Who and where are you?" called out the white Birch.

"You can't see me by daylight," answered the voice; "I am one of the stars. I dare not speak loudly, for fear the Clouds will hear me, but I know what made the Brook in such a hurry."

"Why did n't you say so before?" said the East-wind, sharply.

"I could n't," replied the Star, "for the black Clouds were so near they would have heard me."

"Well, tell it now then," said the East-wind, crossly; "and be quick about it too, for I have business elsewhere."

"The Brook overheard the black Clouds talking together about Edmund," replied the star, "and he thought the Ocean ought to know it; so that was the reason he was in such a hurry to reach him."

"What good will that do us, pray?" asked the East-wind. "We knew before that the Brook had something to tell the Ocean."

"I know what it is," answered the Star, "for I heard it all."

"That alters the case," said the East-wind, in a more amiable tone. "What is it?"

"The Clouds were talking about Edmund, and said they were glad he would have to go to sea. They don't like him because, when he painted them, he always made them look so black and ill-natured."

"That is the way they always look," said the white Birch; "they are gloomy old things."

"I know it," replied the Star; "but they don't like to see themselves painted as they really are. They would prefer to be made brighter and more amiable-looking. So, as I said before, they are displeased

with Edmund, and have never forgiven him."

"They did him a good service when he was about to leave here," remarked the old Oak. "They allowed him to remain with us one day longer."

"No thanks to them for that," said the East-wind. "I drove them over here, and when they found they could n't help themselves, they were very angry and upbraided me for it. That was just what I wanted; for the more they scolded, the worse the storm."

"But what did they say about Edmund?" asked the old Oak. "It must have been of importance to have caused the Brook such uneasiness."

"They said," replied the Star, "that they should be on the lookout to take advantage of any chance that might occur to annoy or injure him. That is what the Brook had to tell the Ocean, that he might be on his guard."

"The Ocean can't prevent them," said the East-wind; "he can't stop them, if they choose to send a fog or a storm. I am the only one who can do that, unless it is the North-wind; but he is an odd fellow, and may take it into his head not to be on our side. There is no reliance to be placed on him."

A sudden blast of cold air came rushing through the forest, and the old Oak shook in every limb. As for the white Birch, her branches were tossed about until she became quite giddy.

"Not to be relied on? So, then, that is your opinion of me, is it?" growled the North-wind, as he came blustering up. "While you have been gossiping here, I have had my hands full. If it had not been for me, the 'Nixie' with all on board would have been at the bottom of the ocean by this time."

"How is that?" asked the East-wind, in

a manner that implied, "I don't believe half of what you say."

"While you have been idling here," said the North-wind, with a severe glance at the East-wind, "the black Clouds have been busy. As I just now told you, if I had not been on the lookout for them, they would have carried out their malicious designs."

CHAPTER IX.

THE East-wind was eager to know what the North-wind had been doing, but did not like to show sufficient interest in his movements to inquire. The white Birch, however, had no such scruples, and impatiently demanded an explanation of the North-wind's words.

"I knew the black Clouds meant mischief," began the North-wind; "so I decided to keep an eye on them. I watched the 'Nixie' as she lay at anchor at the mouth of the river. She was provisioned and waiting for high tide, and I saw the crew go aboard in boats. Edmund went in the last boat, looking happy and contented, now that he was out of the farmer's reach. I was pleased to find that the boy made himself useful, and was quick to see what was

wanted of him. The captain and mate too kept an eye on him, and were well pleased.

"I followed the vessel, as I said, and all went well till they had almost cleared the harbor, when the black Clouds that until now had kept at a distance, separated and spread over the sky. I suspected mischief; and as I was wondering what they were plotting, down came a fog that shut out all objects, and the vessel was nowhere to be seen. I can assure you I felt anxious, for there was the second sand-bar to cross, and the South-wind bearing the schooner right down upon it. You know what an easy-going fellow the South-wind is,— there he kept on blowing as placidly as if nothing were the matter. I called out to him, but either he did n't hear me or was too indolent to stop, for on swept the vessel. I could n't see her, but I heard the captain shouting his orders, and the sails go rattling down, and the anchor thrown out. But in spite of that,

nearer and nearer to the sand-bar went the little schooner, till I could hear the sound of the surf as it broke on the bar.

"At that, I knew there was not a moment to lose, and I blew such a blast as I never blew before, right into the fog. It lifted somewhat, just enough to see the long stretch of sand, with the waves curling and foaming against it, and the white gulls sitting on it and watching the little schooner dragging her anchor towards it. Then the fog collected once more and shut out the sight, and I heard the West-wind coming up. It did n't take long to make him understand the situation, and both together we drove the fog before us till not a scrap as big as a man's hand remained, and the blue sky came out. Then, quick as a flash, the anchor was hoisted, the sails went up, the course of the vessel altered, and the stanch little schooner headed for the open sea."

Here the North-wind paused, quite out of breath, for he had become greatly excited over his story, and there was a moment's silence. It was broken by the old Oak, whose dry leaves rustled with emotion as he remarked, —

"Think of the poor boy at the mercy of such relentless enemies! I wish he were safe on shore."

"He is as safe there as he could be here," replied the North-wind. "A sight of the big world will enlarge his ideas and develop his talent. We will watch him, never fear!"

Meanwhile the fishing-schooner was well on her way to the Banks. Before he had been many days out, Edmund discovered that the voyage would be a longer one than the men had represented, and the captain and mate laughed at his anxious inquiries.

"Most boys would jump at the chance

to see a little of the world," said the mate, consolingly; "so don't you fret, sonny, and we 'll land you high and dry at your uncle's house."

"I should enjoy it if my uncle knew where I was," replied Edmund; "but the farmer will tell him I ran away, and will not tell him how unkindly he treated me."

"We 'll stand by you, sonny," answered the mate, kindly; "he shall know the truth of the story. So you jest make up your mind to settle down to circumstances."

Edmund took the mate's advice, and his naturally happy temperament soon got the better of his misgivings, and he became a great favorite with all on board. His paint-box and block of paper were a never-failing source of entertainment to himself and the crew. He made pictures of the captain and mate, and of all the sailors, and one of the old black cook that was so satisfactory that the old fellow examined it in all his leisure

moments, chuckling with delight every time he looked at it.

"You done hit it dis time, sonny, sho' enough. De ole woman she 'low dat I 'd oughter hab a pictur took las' time I lef' home," was his gratified comment.

Many an hour that otherwise would have worn slowly away to the seamen, to whom this life was a monotonous one, was pleasantly passed in gathering about the boy, watching his skilful fingers as they rapidly traced pictures of his old home. His cousins, the old oak, the white birch, the stiff fir-tree, the lively brook, — all became as old friends to these simple-hearted seamen, who had so few sources of amusement.

Then followed sketches of their native village, — the country store where Edmund had drawn the portraits; then a portrait of the storekeeper, drawn from memory. These reminiscences of the home they had left endeared the young artist to these

rough men, and not one of them would have allowed any harm to come to the boy.

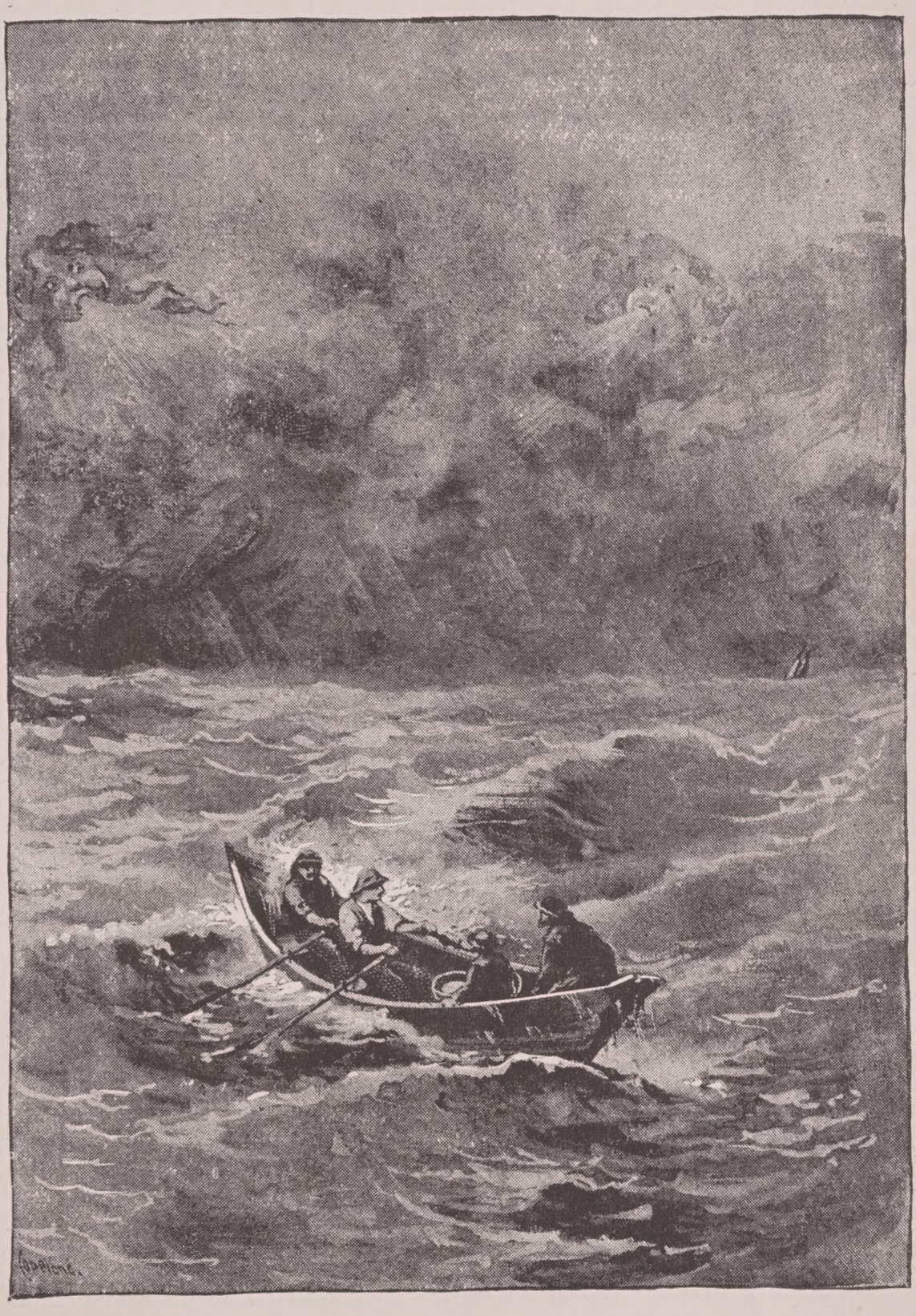
In this manner day after day passed; and at last, after a short voyage, the "Nixie" lay to off the fishing-grounds.

The paint-box was now laid aside, and work began in earnest. Edmund enjoyed the bustle and excitement that followed, and was kept busy baiting hooks, piling away fish, and keeping the deck clean; but before the "Nixie" had completed her cargo he became weary of the sight and odor of fish. He did not fail in his duty, however, and the sailors never imagined that the willing boy who responded so quickly to their calls was dreaming constantly of his far-away home.

For many days they cruised about, looking out for fresh schools of fish; and one day the two boats were ordered out after a large school of mackerel that had been sighted, and Edmund was in one of them.

As fast as the lines were thrown in, the silvery fishes were pulled into the boats. So busy were they, that they did not see the clouds that were gathering in the west and gradually approaching; nor did they perceive the gradual darkness that was stealing about them and stealthily surrounding them. Not till it was too late did they become aware of the dense sea-fog that soon enveloped them, and through which neither vessel nor small-boat could be descried. In vain they shouted; in what direction the answering "halloos" were, it was impossible to tell through the dense fog.

The little dory in which Edmund was, was tossed helplessly about at the will of the angry waves, that every moment increased in violence. For an instant she stood still, trembling in every joint, as if to prepare herself for the coming shock, and the next was tossed violently on



"The little dory in which Edmund was, was tossed helplessly about at the will of the angry waves." — *Page* 134.

the top of a tall wave and sent headlong into the foaming trough of the angry sea.

No one knew in what direction the land lay; and the men, with resolute faces, bent all their energies to keeping the little boat with her head to the waves, knowing that if she lay in the trough of the sea she would be instantly swamped.

All this time Edmund sat still, grasping firmly the sides of the dory, and looking into the weather-beaten faces about him. They were all silent, but each face was resolute and calm. Wave after wave broke against the bow, and sent showers of spray over the silent crew; but still the strong men bent to their oars, with their eyes fixed on the dory's bow.

"Don't be scared, sonny; we 'll come out of this all right," said one of the men at last, meeting the boy's gaze.

"I 'm not scared," replied Edmund, qui-

etly; and indeed there was no look of fear on his face.

"Steady, boys, steady! keep her head to the wind," he heard the mate say, as the little dory, balancing herself on the crest of a tall wave, trembled and shook till it seemed as if every seam must part, then was hurled into the foaming gulf below. A terrific bump, another, and still another, — and Edmund found himself in the water.

"Hold on to the boy! for God's sake, don't let the boy drown!" were the last words Edmund heard before darkness fell upon him and consciousness ceased.

"What can be the reason we hear no news of Edmund?" exclaimed the white Birch one morning. "The East-wind is as cross as two sticks, and the North-wind is a perfect bear. Can anybody tell, pray? If I were not rooted here, *I* could find out."

A faint voice from far above was now heard, but an angry gust of wind carried away the sound.

"It is of no use to try to talk *now*," called up the white Birch, angrily. "Wait until that cross-patch of an East-wind is out of the way, and then we can converse comfortably."

For answer, the East-wind blew a still sharper blast; but the white Birch only tossed her long branches and laughed merrily.

"Just what I like!" she exclaimed gleefully; "please do it again! I feel just like being shaken up this morning."

"Glad to accommodate you, I'm sure," replied the East-wind spitefully, and blowing with all the strength of his lungs.

The Brook babbled angrily, the Fir-tree shook down a shower of needles, and the leaves of the old Oak rustled helplessly; but the white Birch only laughed louder

than ever; and finding he could not provoke her to an answer, the East-wind left in high dudgeon.

As soon as he was gone, the Brook ceased his angry murmuring, the Fir-tree sighed with relief, and the rustling of the old Oak ceased. A happier mood stole over all.

"The West-wind is coming!" cried the white Birch, joyfully. "I am sure of it. Now we can hear one another speak."

"Perhaps you can hear me now," called down the same voice they had heard before.

"What were you trying to say when that hateful East-wind interrupted us?" asked the white Birch.

"I know why he was so disagreeable," answered the Star, twinkling faintly. "He knew I could tell something about him. I know about the quarrel he and the North-wind had. They were both following the 'Nixie,' and each wanted his own way. The East-wind wanted to drive the schooner

west, and the North-wind wanted her to go south; and soon they both lost their tempers, and one blew one way and the other another way; and in the midst of their quarrel the little dory in which Edmund was, was thrown against a rock, and all were thrown out.

"The winds then realized the mischief they had created by their obstinacy, and seeing one of the sailors trying to reach the shore with Edmund, who was senseless, they blew in that direction and wafted them safely ashore. From there the sailor and Edmund made their way to the nearest town. There I lost sight of the boy; but I know the West-wind is following him, and before long you will have news from him."

At about this time a letter arrived from the farmer, stating that Edmund had run away because he did n't like to work, but carefully avoiding the real facts of the case.

"I thought he 'd soon tire of hard work,"

said his uncle, after reading the letter; "such boys never stick to one thing. I always knew he'd never amount to anything."

"I am sure he did not run away unless he was badly treated," replied his wife, warmly. "He is industrious and faithful, and there must be a good reason for his leaving. Oh, what can have become of the poor boy?"

"He's *safe* enough," answered her husband. "He'll turn up before long. He's more than money enough to pay his fare back. I shall send him right back again, though. He'll find my will is stronger than his, and I shall do what I can to make a man of him."

Several days passed, however, and Edmund did not appear; and his uncle, at his wife's earnest request, went to see the farmer. From him he learned that the boy had run away because he would not allow

him to spend his time making pictures, concealing the fact of his conscientious discharge of his duties.

In the village his uncle learned that he had shipped on board the "Nixie;" and he returned home with the news that the boy had run away to go to sea, — "as such boys are apt to do," his uncle added; "but he 'll find the poetry well taken out of him when he gets out to sea. He won't find much time to fool away in drawing then."

The aunt, however, still refused to accept this version of the story, and her tender heart was full of misgivings for the young wanderer. Later he was traced to a town in Canada, where he was said to have made likenesses for his support; and the last time his family heard from him, he was seen in the company of some men who were supposed to be going West. There all traces of the lost boy ended.

CHAPTER X.

WHILE his family were in this state of uncertainty and anxiety regarding his fate, Edmund himself was on board a Western train, speeding rapidly from his friends and home. The men in whose company he was, struck by his talent for drawing, conceived the idea that this talent could be turned to their advantage, and took him West, instead of helping him find the way to his uncle, as they promised.

When it was too late, the poor boy realized that he had been deceived; but with neither money nor friends, he knew not which way to turn.

Late one night Edmund is sitting in one corner of the smoking-car, and as he looks about him his horror of the companionship of these men becomes almost unbearable.

The car is dimly lighted; groups of men are seated at the little tables placed between the seats, filling the car with dense smoke from their pipes. At one of the tables sit the men in whose power he now is, — one of them a large, powerfully built man, with heavily moulded features, and one maimed eye that gives his repulsive face a most sinister look; the other, tall, lank, with an expression of slyness in his small, deep-set eyes that makes his face even more repulsive than his companion's.

Everything in the car is dingy and forlorn, and as the homesick boy thinks of his home a longing to escape takes possession of him. He looks out of the car-window; through the dim glass he sees dense woods on both sides. Soon the train rushes through a clearing, and the moon shines brightly down on him, with the same old face she wore at home. She smiles on him, — dear old friend, — and seems to beckon to him.

The train rushes on; but this faithful friend keeps pace with it, as if determined not to leave him. He is sure she is following him in order to help him.

The train rushes through forests again, — white birches, stanch old oak-trees, stiff fir-trees; all these the boy recognizes as old and dear friends, and he longs to go among them and ask counsel of them.

The stations are far apart, and he does not know how long it may be before they reach the next one. He looks at the moon, still following the train, and wonders if she will stop when the train stops.

The longing to escape grows stronger and stronger. At last the whistle sounds more frequently, and he knows they are nearing a station.

His heart beats fast. He gives another glance at the moon; she still seems to smile and beckon. One look at his rough companions, so intent on betting at their

cards that they have forgotten him, and he slips noiselessly into the adjoining baggage-car. It is piled high with baggage, and he conceals himself where he cannot be seen.

The train gradually pulls up at a station. He glances again at the moon; she stops as the train stops, and he is sure she is waiting for him. This thought encourages him, and he knows he has but a moment to choose between these old, tried friends and the coarse, dissolute men in the smoking-car. His sensitive nature shudders at the thought of being again in their power. The moon is a peaceful friend and guide, and he unhesitatingly decides to trust himself to her guidance.

The moment the train stops he descends the steps and quickly glides behind the station. The West-wind fans his cheek and caresses his hair, and seems to greet him as a long-lost friend. He listens to it, and with his old friends about him, thinks his

home cannot be far off. He lets the train pass on.

As the distance between him and the train increases, he sees the men whom he so dreads rush to the rear platform of the last car and gesticulate wildly. He knows they have discovered his escape, and that they are incensed and disappointed at it. The brakeman joins them, and evidently tries to appease them, and apparently endeavors to persuade them to enter the car again.

Trembling with excitement and apprehension, Edmund watches the train disappear in the distance, the lantern on the rear car growing dimmer and dimmer, until it seems like a glow-worm, and then disappears altogether. Then, with a sigh of relief, he makes his way to the woods, over which the moon stands and still seems to beckon.

The release from the dense atmosphere of the smoky car to the gentle breezes

of the West-wind, fragrant with the pure breath of the forest-trees, fills the home-sick boy with delight, and he takes in deep breaths of it. Then he walks rapidly towards the woods.

A slender white birch, that reminds him of his old friend by the brook at home, nods and waves her long branches in welcome; a sturdy old oak rustles his leaves soothingly, and a fir-tree greets him with gentle sighs.

The moon is overhead, still looking down; and in the presence of these dear friends, the tired boy throws himself down on the ground, and happy in the thought that his old home is not far off, a drowsy feeling steals over him.

The moon beams on him with her mild, motherly face; the rustle of the forest-trees sounds to him like sweet music, and a more profound and peaceful sleep than he has known for many days comes to him.

So deep was the wanderer's slumber that when he awoke the next morning, and his eyes fell on the branches of the oak-tree above him, his first thought was that he was at home, and had fallen asleep at the foot of his old friend. Gradually the true state of affairs stole over his waking senses, and he lay considering what step to take next. By degrees the consciousness of a presence comes to him, and turning his eyes to one side, he sees a young Indian seated on the trunk of a fallen tree a short distance off, and steadfastly regarding him.

The Indian is dressed like a hunter, with flannel shirt and leather leggings, and a gun lies at his feet.

Edmund gives a sudden start at sight of the Indian, and his heart beats fast. The Indian is the first to speak, and asks him what he wants there. The boy tells his story, the other listening attentively. When the narrative is ended, the Indian says, —

"Where white boy's home?"

"It cannot be far from here," replied Edmund; "everything looks so familiar to me. Perhaps twenty or thirty miles."

"White boy's home that away," said the Indian, pointing; "Injun show white boy way to home."

Edmund looked at the young Indian. His form was tall and supple, his face intelligent and spirited. The boy's artistic nature appreciated the beauty of the active figure and handsome face, and he was instinctively drawn to him. Without a moment's hesitation he rose to follow his new guide.

"White boy's home far away, — over mountain, through woods, round big swamp; Injun show him way," said the Indian.

The Indian walked easily through the woods, making no noise as he went, stepping as lightly and securely in his mocca-

sins as if he were walking on level ground. Edmund followed as well as he could, stumbling over roots and stones concealed by the thick underbrush, dried branches and leaves crackling under his feet.

They continued in silence for some time. At last the Indian said, —

"White boy's home far away; must eat. Injun bring home buck, or old squaw will scold and throw sticks at him. White boy know how hunt, mebbe?"

"No," replied Edmund.

"White boy step soft, — keep still, — Injun show him how," said the young Indian.

They proceeded again silently for a while; then the Indian pointed to the ground, saying, —

"Big buck!"

Edmund looked on the ground, but saw nothing.

"Big buck that away, — doe follow

him. No kill doe, kill buck!" said the Indian.

The Indian pointed in the direction the buck had gone, but crossed his track instead of following it. Edmund, suspecting the Indian had deceived him, said, —

"Why do you go this way when the deer went that way?"

The young Indian replied scornfully, —

"White boy not know how hunt. Injun hunt. Buck that away, — he double, — six, three mile away."

Edmund, still suspicious, asked: "How do you know that?"

"Wind tell Injun. Wind come from buck. If wind go back, he tell buck."

The course pursued by the hunter now became plain to Edmund. He must keep to leeward of the buck, or the wind would carry the odor of their presence to him.

The two kept on through bogs and over rocks. Edmund was scratched by briers

and caught by branches, and he wondered if they would ever find the buck.

Suddenly the Indian gave him a sign to keep back. He followed the direction of the Indian's eyes, but saw nothing; and while he was endeavoring to discover what the Indian was gazing at so intently, he saw him suddenly raise his gun and fire.

Quickly following the crack of the gun was a crash and rush, as if some large object were plunging; then all was still, as if it had escaped to the woods.

The Indian said nothing, but rapidly reloaded his gun.

Edmund trembled with excitement, not knowing what was about to happen. The Indian swiftly ran towards the place whence the plunging sound had come, Edmund following as well as he could. When they reached the spot, Edmund, who expected to find the dead deer, was astonished to see nothing.

"You missed him," he said.

The Indian moved a few paces farther on, and picking up a leaf that had a speck of frothy blood on it, said, —

"Buck hit in heart! Him dead down there!"

About forty paces farther on they found the dead buck on the ground. The sight of the graceful creature that but a few moments before was so full of life and strength, now lying motionless at his feet, filled Edmund with horror, and he felt a great pity for the beautiful animal.

The Indian had no such emotions, and proceeded to take off the skin with his knife. Then he took a hatchet from his belt and divided the body into two portions, saying, —

"Injun take home half buck, send squaw for other half. Long way home; must have food to eat."

Thereupon he quartered the buck and

cut a piece off the saddle. Edmund helped him collect dried sticks, and the Indian built a fire and roasted the venison. They then sat down to eat.

The thought of eating the flesh of the animal that so short a time before was enjoying his innocent life and liberty, was repugnant to Edmund, and it required much resolution to overcome this feeling; but hunger and fatigue compelled him to avail himself of the only food within his reach, and he ate what he could not have brought his mind to taste under other circumstances. When they had finished their repast, Edmund expressed a desire for water.

The Indian went a short distance, where the ground was swampy, and scraping away the leaves from the foot of a large rock, disclosed a spring. It was too far under the rock to be reached easily, and the Indian, peeling from a white birch a

piece of soft, leathery bark, skilfully folded it into a cup, pinning it into place with a twig, and scooping up some of the water, offered it to Edmund.

Edmund was greatly refreshed by the draught and repast, and they continued on their way, the Indian taking a quarter of the buck and giving Edmund a quarter, and leaving the remainder for the squaw to take.

After a long and tedious tramp, just as the sun was setting, the Indian stopped, and Edmund found that they had reached an Indian hunter's camp.

There were several rude wigwams, such as Indians use when on a hunting expedition. A pole was stretched between two trees; against this were other poles reaching to the ground and covered with bark, with an opening at one end.

Several Indians, dressed like the young Indian, were sitting and lying about.

Women were busied about the wigwams, and several children played near. The oldest man of the party, who was evidently the chief, approached the newcomers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE two Indians conversed together in their native tongue, Edmund watching their faces intently; for he knew he was the subject of their conversation.

The elder Indian had a hard face, and the boy felt instinctively that he could expect little sympathy from him. The young Indian spoke low, and Edmund imagined, from the softer tones of his voice, that he was pleading his cause.

The elder man spoke with a harsh, guttural accent, and frequently asked questions, occasionally glancing at Edmund with his glittering black eyes.

While this dialogue was going on between the two Indians, several squaws with untidy-looking calico dresses and disordered hair came out of their wigwams

and stared curiously at the stranger, talking fast in their native tongue all the while. The children too joined the group, and peered at him as curiously as their elders. Some even went so far as to feel of his clothes and touch his hair.

All this the boy bore patiently, although his heart was full of anxiety as he met the hard eye of the chief. He had read many stories of Indians, and knew they were capable of great cruelties to the whites; but he knew that Indians living so near white habitations must have become more civilized.

After what seemed a very long time to the anxious boy, the chief addressed him, —

"Why white boy run away from white men?"

With that cold black eye on him, and that harsh voice so devoid of sympathy questioning him, Edmund felt his hope

growing fainter and fainter; but his truthful nature always asserted itself, and he answered fearlessly, —

"Because they deceived me. They promised to take me home, and I found they were bad men."

"How white boy know um bad?" asked the chief. "They take him home, mebbe; that not bad."

"They did not mean to take me home," replied Edmund; "they went farther and farther away from my home, so I left them."

"How white boy know um bad?" repeated the Indian.

Edmund hesitated a moment. With that cold eye on him, he could not explain that something within him told him they were bad and caused him to shrink from them; but the eye was still on him, and he must answer. "They used bad language and quarrelled together," he said at last, "and they gambled at cards."

The Indian curled his lip contemptuously, and said something in the Indian language, at which the squaws laughed and the children jeered.

Edmund felt his case growing desperate. He looked at the young Indian who had conducted him hither, hoping that he would take his part; but the youth persistently avoided his eye, and it was impossible for Edmund to judge of the state of his feelings from his immovable face. Unable to bear this suspense any longer, he resolved to appeal to the generosity of the chief.

"*Do* show me the way to my home," he pleaded. "It cannot be very far from here, and I am strong and can bear fatigue. If you only knew how long it is since I have seen my friends, and how I long to get there, I am sure you would help me."

The hard face of the chief did not relent, even as the boy's voice trembled in his eagerness. The young Indian, the while,

was leaning against a tree and gazing far off into the forest, with his features as immovable as before; and yet something told Edmund that the only ray of hope left him would come through him.

"Injuns stay few days longer to hunt, then take white boy home," said the chief at last.

"Oh, do tell me the way, and I can go alone!" cried Edmund; "I know I can find it if you will only direct me. Indeed I cannot wait so long."

"White boy no find him way alone," replied the chief, coldly. "Big swamps, — lose him way; bears in forest, — eat him up."

"I am not afraid," said Edmund; "I know I can find my way."

"Injuns leave camp in few days, — take white boy, show him way home," replied the chief, coldly; and turning to one of the squaws, he gave orders in the Indian tongue.

The squaw gave a grunt of assent, and said to Edmund: "White boy come in wigwam; show him where him sleep."

Edmund dared make no resistance, but cast a parting glance at the young Indian, who still leaned against the tree, as immovable as before, his dark eyes fixed on the forest before him; then with a sigh he followed the squaw.

The wigwam was dark, and the atmosphere close and fetid. The squaw placed a plate of corn and beans before the white boy, and a piece of corn bread, but he was too unhappy and excited to eat of the unsavory food. After he had forced down a few mouthfuls the squaw pointed to a corner where some fir-boughs were thrown, and said, —

"White boy sleep there."

Edmund threw himself down on the boughs, and lay looking out through the opening in the tent, at the outline of the

forest-trees, now hardly discernible in the dim twilight, and wondered if the Indian really intended to take him home.

Before long several children came in, evidently clamoring in their native tongue for something to eat. They devoured ravenously the food that seemed so unpalatable to him; and when they had eaten what was placed before them, the squaw pushed them towards the corner where Edmund lay. They rolled around on the boughs, at first good-naturedly pulling hair and pushing one another about; but before long the thumps and kicks they gave became too hard to be agreeable, and they bit and scratched in earnest, like young tigers. The squaw at this interfered with threats and blows dealt indiscriminately, and silence was at last restored.

The children were soon asleep; but Edmund was restless and wakeful, and tossed about uneasily. Later, an Indian man en-

tered the wigwam, and before long all was silent.

Edmund watched the fire burning in front of the wigwam, and the indistinct line of the forest-trees, to whom he always turned in his homesickness.

All at once a bright disk appeared over the dark outline of trees, and the glorious hunter's moon slowly rose into view. She gradually sailed up into the clear sky, and the old familiar face beamed down on the lonely boy through the open door of the wigwam.

"I have found you, dear boy," she seemed to say; "you see I have not deserted you."

As he gazed at her, with the same familiar features she wore when she looked into his little window at home, the comforting thought came to him that at that very moment she was looking down on his old home, — in at the windows of his sleeping

cousins, and shining on the glistening leaves of the white birch, and the noisy brook, and the old oak, and the stiff fir-tree.

"Don't despair," the gentle face seemed to say. "I shall never leave you. Wherever you are, I shall follow, and will help you. Only have patience."

With the familiar face smiling down on him, the close air of the wigwam and the revolting companionship of its inmates gradually became vague and more vague, and at last disappeared altogether, and the boy slept, — to see in his dreams his old home, and hear the voices of his cousins as they played by the rippling brook and climbed over the sturdy branches of the old oak.

In his dream Kate, playfully stooping to dip her hand in the brook, dashed a few drops of the cold water against his face, and he awoke to the reality of a cool September morning and an Indian camp life.

The men of the camp were engaged in putting their guns in order. This filled Edmund with hope, for he interpreted it as a sign they were to leave the camp. The young Indian who had been his guide was seated on the ground in front of his wigwam, cleaning his gun.

As Edmund approached, he neither looked up nor made the slightest motion to show that he was aware of his presence.

"Are you going to start to-day?" asked Edmund, eagerly.

"Injuns go hunt," replied the other, without looking up from his work.

"Will you take me with you?" asked Edmund.

"Chief John tell white boy what him do," replied the young Indian, indifferently.

At this moment the chief came out of the tent before which they were, and Edmund appealed to him.

"Will you take me with you?" he asked, anxiously watching his face.

"Injuns go long way when hunt," replied Chief John, with his face as immovable as ever, — "over mountain, round swamp. White boy no go so far, — get hungry, get tired, cry like pappoose."

"Oh, no! I am stronger than you think," said Edmund. "I will help you. I will not complain if I am tired. I can help carry your game. Did n't I help you bring home the buck?" he asked the young Indian.

"Too far for white boy, — him too young, — hunt when him big," replied the youth, his eyes still fixed on the gun he was cleaning.

"White boy stay in camp, — help squaw in wigwam, look after pappoose," said Chief John; and with the hard eye on him Edmund dared not press the matter further.

He sorrowfully watched the hunting-party depart; and as they left the camp, the young Indian, who went last, turned before he disappeared down the rocky declivity that led from the camp, and for the first time since Edmund had entered the camp, looked at him. Hasty as the glance was, the forlorn boy read in it sympathy for him, and his heart throbbed wildly with hope.

The day wore tediously away; but Edmund bore his trials patiently, remembering the glance from the young Indian's dark eyes. It seemed to the unhappy boy as if the squaw employed all her ingenuity in inventing work to keep him busy; frequently sending him to the spring for water, then ordering him to collect dried wood for the fire at which she cooked, and to fill up the remainder of the time in looking after the children.

This last occupation was the hardest of

all, for the children were untidy and ill-natured, and whenever he attempted to restrain them, they vented their displeasure in loud screams and yells, which never failed to bring down on his head a torrent of abuse from the squaw.

The older boys questioned him in regard to his past life; and Edmund, glad of any human companionship, told anecdotes of his experiences. They were greatly interested in his account of his fishing-voyage, and asked many questions about the "great salt water," as they called the ocean, which they had never seen.

These tales evidently inspired them with more respect for the white boy; and they, in turn, told him stories of their life.

He learned from them that their tribe was situated several days' journey away, and that this camp was a detachment that would join the tribe when the hunting-season was over. "Then white boy see big

camp," exclaimed one of the boys, proudly, — "heap big camp."

"I shall not go with you," replied Edmund; "the chief has promised to take me home in a few days."

"Chief John tell white boy heap lie," said the Indian boy; "him take white boy to tribe, teach him hunt."

"How do you know it?" asked Edmund, quickly.

"Injun boy speak with Injun tongue, Chief John Injun tongue; him say no take white boy home, — take him big camp, teach him hunt."

Another of the boys, older than the one who had spoken, here said something in the Indian language. Judging from the gestures, Edmund conjectured he was upbraiding the younger one for giving the information.

A violent discussion ensued, which ended in a hand-to-hand tussle; and dispirited

and disgusted, Edmund was glad to hear the squaw calling to him to bring more wood.

The hunting-party returned in the evening bearing plenty of game, and Edmund was kept busy by the squaw while she prepared the evening meal for the hunters. The half-cooked meat the Indians devoured so greedily, was repulsive to the white boy, and he found it difficult to force any of it down.

Edmund watched eagerly the young Indian's face, hoping to catch another look from him; but it was impossible to meet his eye, and his manner was so indifferent and cold that he wondered if he could have been mistaken.

CHAPTER XII.

EDMUND'S life in the Indian hunters' camp went on in the same monotonous manner. Every day he brought wood and water for the squaw, and took care of the children. Several of the squaws were occupied in making baskets that they sold at the distant white settlements; and finding that the white boy quickly learned to weave the supple ash-twigs, they frequently set him to work on them.

At first this novel occupation was a recreation for him, but it soon became tedious and monotonous.

A week passed in this manner, and Chief John made no move to take him home as he had promised. Edmund feared the Indian boy had told the truth when he said

the chief's intention was to keep him with the tribe. Many times the request to be taken home was on his lips; but the chief's manner was so forbidding that his courage forsook him, and he resolved to wait patiently awhile longer.

One evening Chief John sat in front of his wigwam, conversing with his son, whom Edmund had discovered the young Indian who brought him to the camp to be. The hunt had been unusually successful that day, and the chief seemed to be in a more affable mood than usual.

Edmund stood at a distance, and watched them seated before the fire that was kept burning in front of the wigwam during the cool September evenings. Stern and cold as the chief's manner ordinarily was, deep in his Indian heart must have lurked a spark of parental affection, for the tones that were usually so harsh grew almost soft as he talked with his son; and feeling in-

stinctively that it would be well to take advantage of this softened mood, the boy took courage and ventured to approach.

Neither of the Indians looked up as he appeared; but conversation ceased, and he knew they were aware of his presence.

"Can't you take me home now?" asked Edmund, in rather faint tones; for the glittering eyes of the chief were turned towards him as he spoke, and he began to feel he had taken a very audacious step. "It is more than a week since I came here, and you promised to take me home in a few days."

"Injuns hunt more, — plenty buck in woods. Bimeby big frosts come; then Injuns go back to tribe, — take white boy too," answered Chief John.

"I can't wait so long!" cried Edmund, in despair. "They will think at home that I am dead, it is so long since they have heard from me. I can go alone."

"White boy no go alone, — Injuns take him home bimeby," said the chief, coldly.

Edmund cast an imploring glance at the young Indian. He sat leaning against the wigwam with his eyes fixed on the fire, and his features showed no emotion of any kind.

"*Do* try to persuade your father to let me go," pleaded the desperate boy, still instinctively feeling that the young Indian was the only one of that unsympathetic tribe who had any touch of feeling for him. "Tell him how lonely it is for me to be so long away from my family. He is fond of you, — I heard how soft his voice grew when he talked to you. Tell him how badly you would feel if you were separated from him. He must surely listen to you."

The young Indian evinced no emotion of any kind as Edmund spoke, although the boy's voice was tremulous and broken from the effort he made to control himself, and

his eyes were moist with the tears he manfully kept back.

"Better white boy stay with Injuns. Injuns take him to big camp where tribe is, — make him big chief, mebbe, when big."

At this blow to his hopes Edmund made no reply, but a hard look settled down on his face as he turned from the Indians to go to the wigwam where he slept. Now that he knew for a certainty that Chief John had deceived him and intended to keep him in his tribe and make an Indian of him, and that the young Indian whom he imagined to be friendly to him had no more sympathy for him than the others of his tribe, he resolved to take matters into his own hands, and embrace the first opportunity to escape that offered itself.

Yet, as he had turned to go, he had caught a quick glance from the young Indian's eyes, whose lips he thought formed the word "Wait." Could he have under-

stood the sudden resolve to escape that entered the boy's mind?

Closer and more revolting than ever seemed the wigwam as Edmund entered it and threw himself down on his bed of boughs. The children were asleep, and he lay there revolving in his mind the chances for escape. It must be effected when the Indians were away hunting, when he was sent to bring water from the spring or dried wood for the fire; and he resolved to take advantage of the first opportunity that presented itself. Was he right in thinking the young Indian meant to tell him to wait, or had he been mistaken, as he was before? It was impossible to tell.

The squaw was in her corner asleep; and later the Indian came in, bringing with him the fumes of whiskey and tobacco, and soon his heavy breathing announced his deep slumber.

The hunter's moon was waning. It seemed to the restless and excited boy tossing about sleeplessly on his fir-boughs that she would never appear. The West-wind was there, — he had not deserted him. He looked in at the open door of the wigwam, and wafted in fresh breezes to cool the boy's heated brow. At last up rose the Moon, with part of her glory gone, and the boy imagined her face wore a sad expression.

Suddenly the thought seized him that she was soon to leave him, — that in a few days more he would lose sight of this old friend who had followed him so faithfully through his trials. What should he do without her? How could he bear his hard lot without her friendly face to comfort him?

The heavens were thick with fleecy clouds, and as they moved across the sky it seemed to him as if it were his old

friend who was moving, sailing rapidly away from him. She still looked at him, though, smiling sadly, as if loath to desert him.

"Oh, take me with you!" cried the lonely boy; "I cannot be left alone here. Show me the way home!"

The clouds dispersed, and the Moon seemed to stop for an instant, remaining motionless in the sky, as if waiting for him.

The West-wind rustled the trees that grew about the wigwam, and to his overwrought imagination resolved itself into a voice that called to him to follow. He looked about him. The Indian was groaning in his sleep, restless from his drunken orgies; the squaw breathed heavily by his side.

The West-wind wafted another breath, fragrant with the odor of the forest, in at the open door, as if inviting him to

come out; and the boy noiselessly arose and stepped outside the wigwam.

All was still. The fires in front of the wigwams were dying out, and not a sound indicated the presence of a human being. The boy glanced up at the Moon; she was sailing on again, still looking down on him.

"I will follow you, old friend," said the boy, softly; "better to perish in the woods with old friends about me than live among these dreadful people."

He stole cautiously along, fearful lest his footsteps should warn the sleeping Indians. A dry twig under his feet crackled in the stillness with a report that sounded to his overwrought nerves like a pistol-shot. He stopped to listen, his heart beating fast.

Not a sound came from the silent wigwams; only the loud thumping of his fast-beating heart was audible in the stillness, and he continued his stealthy walk.

As he approached the wigwam of the chief, that stood on the outskirts of the camp, the dread of seeing him appear took such possession of the boy that a violent trembling seized him, and he stopped before the open door, expecting every minute to hear the harsh voice of the chief bidding him return.

All was still there, and he went on, and began to descend cautiously the declivity that led down from the camp to the woods, in whose friendly shadows he hoped to escape. When half-way down, a sudden cry from the forest almost chilled the blood in his veins, and he stood as if paralyzed, his eyes riveted on the camp behind him, expecting to see his pursuers appear.

All was quiet, however; and a large owl, whose cry in the excited state of his mind he had not recognized, flew up from the dense forest before him.

The owl sailed out of sight, and on went

the boy, — a little faster now, as the distance between him and the camp increased, — the Moon floating along above him, and the West-wind following him with soft breaths.

The foot of the hill is now reached, and the broad forest lies still and dark before him. He hesitates in which direction to go. He looks up at the Moon; she still sails placidly on, and he follows, breathing freely at last, as he enters the dark woods.

A slight rustle of leaves from behind, and he starts violently as a hand is laid lightly on his shoulder. He looks around in terror, and sees the young Indian. They look at each other in silence for a while; then the Indian speaks, —

"What for white boy run away?"

"Because I could n't stand it any longer," replied poor Edmund.

"Injun say, 'White boy, wait, — bimeby help him find home.'"

"Will you really help me if I will wait?" asked Edmund, joyfully.

"Injun say help white boy find him home; Injun no lie, — keep him word," answered the young Indian, proudly.

"Then I will try to be patient," said Edmund, "for I believe you are my friend."

"White boy too much fool, — no run away alone. Injuns find him in morning, then keep him in wigwam."

"When will you take me home? How long must I wait?" asked Edmund.

"No long wait, — when moon go away. Then woods dark; Injun find him way when dark, know hide from chief, take poor white boy home."

"Why did you tell me to wait?" asked Edmund. "What made you think I was going to run away?"

"Saw it in white boy's eyes," answered the Indian. "Moon shine down on forest,

— white boy love forest. Moon go through sky, — take white boy to him home mebbe. Wind blow soft, — say, 'Come.'"

"That 's just how it was!" exclaimed Edmund, happy to be understood; "but how did you know it?"

"Injun love forest too. Moon speak to him, — sorry when him sorry, smile when him glad. Wind speak too, — tell him where go."

"How strange," said Edmund, gazing admiringly on the young Indian, whose face had lost its usual indifferent expression and looked kindly on him, "that you should feel so much as I do! They always laughed at me at home when I told them the wind and trees seemed to speak to me."

"White boy go back in wigwam. Chief John wake up mebbe, find white boy gone, then keep him in wigwam, take him to big camp, — no get home."

Edmund understood the reason for this advice, and obediently started to go back.

"Injun go first," said the young Indian. "Chief John wake up mebbe; find him gone; find white boy gone too, — then Injun no help him get away. White boy come back soon, — no look at Injun any more, no speak to him. Injun say, when time come, what him do."

Edmund watched the supple form of the young Indian as he lightly sprang up the hill that led to the camp, and saw him disappear in his wigwam. Then, with his heart lightened of a heavy burden, he followed cautiously. As he passed the chief's tent he glanced up, hoping to catch a glimpse of his young friend; but all was dark and silent there, and he entered his own wigwam and threw himself down on the fir-boughs in the corner.

The Moon still looked down on him; but it seemed to him that she wore a happier

look, as if she approved of the decision he had taken. The West-wind too looked in upon him, and seemed to murmur approval; and happy in the approbation of these old friends and the recollection of the young Indian's promise, he fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning Edmund awoke with a lighter heart than he had borne for many days. Now that he had the young Indian's assurance that he would help him, he felt sure of seeing his old home once more. The old squaw was even more exacting than usual that day, and contrived to keep every moment employed; but in his happy mood, the boy cheerfully fetched water and wood, and even sang and whistled to himself as he went.

This change of manner the squaw noticed, and as is the instinct of cross-grained people, employed all her ingenuity to bring about a change of mood. Finding her efforts unavailing, — that the oftener he went to the woods the lighter became his step,

— she resolved to try another method. She little knew the great power opposed to her, — that Mother Nature spoke to the forlorn boy through the sky and winds and trees; that the water bubbling up in the clear spring had a voice for him that drowned her querulous tones; that the wild-flowers, nodding as he passed, whispered promises that might soon be fulfilled.

With the intuition that characterizes such unamiable people, the squaw changed his occupation to that of nurse to the younger children. Even that failed to disturb the boy's cheerful temper, and not once did she have the gratification of hearing one of those irritable cries from the children that never failed to bring down on the white boy's innocent head a torrent of invectives from her nimble tongue.

Never had Edmund tried so hard to please his unattractive charges as he did this morning. Peeling off strips of smooth

birch-bark, he fashioned them into every form his imagination could invent. Nests of boxes, baskets, little boats, and other toys that these neglected children had never heard of grew under his skilful hands, — the small pappooses watching him silently with their bead-like eyes as the bark took these wonderful shapes.

Edmund himself became as interested as they, and suddenly a new idea struck him. Selecting a piece of charred wood from the fire, he rapidly sketched on a smooth piece of birch-bark the wigwam, with the squaw cooking before the fire.

The older children gazed at the picture in astonishment, looking in bewilderment from the picture to the wigwam and back again. Next came a picture of one of the children, then another; each one of which was recognized at once.

The squaw approached and looked over the young artist's shoulder. As she recog-

nized the different subjects, and lastly herself, her surprise amounted even to terror.

"Put him in fire!" she screamed, pointing to the innocent pictures; "burn up bad spirit!" and as she spoke she caught up the offending sketches and thrust them into the fire, where they quickly flamed up, and were soon reduced to ashes.

"I did n't intend any harm," explained Edmund; "I only made the pictures to amuse the children."

"Much harm!" exclaimed the squaw, excitedly; "big devil in white boy, — medicine man drive him out."

Poor Edmund, finding his pictures meet with so little appreciation everywhere, might well have been discouraged; but this novel explanation of a devil having taken possession of him amused him.

"Big medicine man in camp where tribe is," explained the squaw. "Bimeby Injuns go back to tribe, white boy go too; medi-

cine man come in, — big horns on him head, long tail hang down behind, — dance round fire, speak loud words, scare devil out white boy."

During the remainder of the day the squaw kept a watchful eye over Edmund's movements. Whenever he looked in her direction he found her small sharp eyes fixed on him, as if she feared the evil spirit that she believed to hold possession of him might return at any moment.

As the day drew to a close, the hunters returned as usual; and after they had partaken of their evening meal, Edmund was ordered to appear before the chief. He knew at once for what he was wanted, and obeyed with trepidation; for he feared he had incurred the displeasure of the chief.

The white boy was not surprised to find a group of Indians assembled about the chief's tent. The chief stood in their midst; and the young Indian, seated on

the ground, intent on shaping a hickory bow, did not look up as he appeared.

The squaw, who, like the rest of her Indian sex, was kept in a state of ignorance, had never seen pictures, and might well have supposed them to be the work of the Evil One; but the chief often visited the white settlements for purposes of trade, and his superior knowledge of the world recognized that what had so terrified the squaw were likenesses that the boy had drawn; and he was curious to have a specimen of his ability. So, as the boy stood trembling before him, the chief requested him to make a portrait of himself.

Edmund, relieved to find he had not incurred the chief's displeasure, replied that he must first supply himself with a piece of birch-bark and charcoal; and while he went in search of them, the chief entered his wigwam to don a wardrobe suitable to the occasion.

When the artist returned, he found the hunting-shirt and leggings that had suited the chief so well exchanged for an old military coat that he had obtained in some business transaction; a tall white beaver hat with a large curved brim, a large feather standing stiffly upright from the centre of the hat, and his long black hair hanging over his shoulders; also a pair of pantaloons that, like the coat, were made for a smaller man, and reached midway between the knee and ankle.

The artist was staggered at this strange figure. The perfect self-possession and haughty carriage of the chief were such a contrast to this ludicrous costume that Edmund found it difficult to keep a grave face. However, his reputation was at stake, and he resolved to do his best.

The boy's nimble fingers moved rapidly over the birch-bark. The Indians gathered about him and watched the growing pic-

ture; and the chief stood stiff and immovable as a statue, retaining throughout his haughty expression. The Indian youth was the only one who manifested no interest in the scene, — sitting on the ground shaping his bow, with not even a glance towards the interested group.

At last Edmund held up the picture, — a perfect fac-simile of the grotesque figure of the chief, who received it with a grunt expressive of satisfaction.

While Chief John was examining his portrait, Edmund took another piece of bark and began again to draw. This time his whole heart was in the work, and as it grew under his hands, the color deepened in his cheeks, and his eyes glowed with pleasure. He put in a few finishing touches, throwing back his head and looking at it fondly, as if it were a subject he loved to dwell upon. Then, with one more lingering glance, he handed it to the chief.

It was a picture of the young Indian, as he sat with his head bent over his work. The chief gave another grunt expressive of satisfaction.

After that, came a picture of the whole camp; then one after another of the Indians requested a portrait of himself. The boy patiently gratified their requests, delighted at an opportunity to please them.

After some tedious hours of work, as Edmund sat making idle figures on the bark before him, outlines of faces he knew began to fill the vacant spaces.

The captain and mate of the fishing-schooner, then the men who had brought him West under pretence of taking him home, and last of all the man with the maimed eye. There it was before him, — the sinister look coming out boldly under the strong lines of the charcoal; and as Edmund finished the shaggy black mustache, an exclamation of surprise from be-

hind startled him. It came from the chief, who had been looking over his shoulder.

"What him name?" he asked, pointing to the hard face.

"It 's the man I ran away from," replied Edmund.

The chief took the picture from the boy, and the Indians crowded around to look at it. An earnest conversation in the Indian language followed, and it was evident they had recognized the portrait. Although Edmund could not understand their conversation and the cause of their sudden excitement, one thing was evident, — his drawings had raised him in the estimation of the chief, for from that moment his manner towards him was changed, for it was marked by a condescension that was a great contrast to his former treatment of him.

That some project regarding him was in progress, was evident during the next few

days. He knew he was the subject of the conversation that went on among the Indians. He looked in vain for some word or sign of explanation from the young Indian; but so indifferent was his manner that it was impossible to obtain any information from him.

One day Edmund, coming up the hill that led to the camp with an armful of wood, met him on his way down, and took advantage of this meeting to ask him how soon he would take him home. The young Indian, without stopping, said as he passed on, —

"Moon say, 'Wait till him gone away, then take white boy home.'"

The words comforted the boy and helped him bear the suspense.

Before long it was evident that something was afoot, for early one morning Chief John and another Indian started off. That their errand was not to hunt was

evident, for they took blankets and dried venison, and bows and arrows, and baskets for trading. It was also evident that they did not intend to return that day. Edmund felt sure that the move concerned him in some way, and his anxiety increased as the day wore on and he could find no explanation of the mystery.

He knew that all of his movements were watched. Wherever he went, glittering dark eyes met his; and at last he became so uneasy under their gaze that he strolled off to the woods.

During the last few days he had been allowed to go about by himself, and no notice was taken of him now. His favorite spot was in an enclosure where a brook tumbled down a stony bed and then flowed in a deep stream until it was lost in the dense woods.

Throwing himself at full length on the soft grass, he lay listening to the music

of the water as it hurried over the steep stones and fell foaming into the deeper water, where its murmur gradually ceased, as it blended with the stream and flowed calmly along.

How often he had watched the brook at home! As he listened to the familiar sound of the water and the voice of the wind murmuring through the trees, he almost forgot that he was not at home, with Kate and Fred by his side. So absorbed was he, that the light footsteps behind him failed to arouse him from his revery, and it was some time later that he looked up to see the young Indian on the grass beside him, his dark eyes fixed on the running brook.

"Him happy now, — go along soft," said the Indian, still gazing at the stream. "Sometime him angry, — go fast, jump over rocks, hurry tell big river what him knows."

"So I have often thought of our brook at home," replied Edmund. "I often said so to Kate and Fred; but they only laughed, and said it was my imagination. I wish I knew what they were doing now!" and Edmund sighed.

"White boy no be sorry," said the Indian, cheerfully. "Brook glad; sun look glad; wind glad too, — say white boy, 'Wait.'"

"I *try* to be patient," replied Edmund, "but it does seem so long."

"Moon 'most gone; soon night dark; then Injun show white boy home," said the young Indian, encouragingly.

"Where has the chief gone?" asked Edmund, "and why does he treat me so much more kindly than he used to?"

"White boy ran away from white man. Chief know name of white man when white boy make him on bark. Chief gone see man."

"Oh dear!" cried Edmund, terrified at the thought of coming again into the power of that dreaded man, "does he mean to take me back to him?"

"White boy make faces come on bark, — great medicine man some day. White man give chief heap money for him," explained the Indian.

"Don't let him take me back!" cried poor Edmund, clutching the hand of the young Indian in his terror. "You are the only true friend I have to help me. *Don't* let him take me back!"

"Injun say take white boy back to him home, — Injun no tell lie," replied the young Indian, proudly.

"Why can't you take me now?" asked Edmund. "The chief is away, and we shall never have a better chance."

"Plenty chance!" answered the Indian, scornfully. "White boy too fool. Injun

know when time come; then him say white boy, 'Come.'"

Edmund in his helplessness felt that his only chance of escape lay through the Indian; and hard as it was, he resolved to bide his time.

CHAPTER XIV.

MEANWHILE Edmund's friends at home were in as unhappy a state of mind as the boy himself. His aunt still refused to believe the farmer's assurances that the boy had been kindly treated, and had run away because he was too indolent to work. His cousins shared her confidence in their absent companion, and even his practical uncle had secret misgivings that he had been unjust to his nephew. Many answers were received to the advertisements asking for information of the lost boy, but none of them brought news of him whom they sought. His uncle, to gratify his wife's earnest wishes and also to ease his own conscience, took many journeys in order to follow out some clew; but they invariably ended in disappointment.

The old Oak-tree and the white Birch and the prim Fir-tree were in a state of great uneasiness. The last news of Edmund that had reached them was from the West-wind, who had told them of his safe arrival at the Indian encampment; and since then they had received no intelligence of their lost favorite. The West-wind had appeared once since then; but before he had fairly arrived, the East-wind had come in a state of great excitement, and after conversing together for a while the West-wind had disappeared. Then the North-wind arrived, and after a short consultation the East-wind and the North-wind had rushed off together in a state of great excitement, without paying any attention to anxious inquiries. The South-wind knew as little about the matter as the trees themselves, so they could learn nothing from him.

The Brook too, usually so cheerful, was as depressed as they were, and flowed sadly

along, in too melancholy a state of mind to raise even a ripple.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the white Birch, in an irritable tone to the Brook, whom she had been watching for some time. "Why don't you do something about it, instead of flowing along as if you had no more life than a mill-pond?" and she pettishly switched one of her long branches across his smooth surface, as if she would have liked to push him along faster.

"Why don't you do something about it yourself?" answered the Brook angrily, dashing some spray over her in return for the push she had given him.

"Pray, how can *I* do anything?" asked the white Birch, shaking off the drops.

"Well, then, how can I, any more than you? And why should n't I feel sad? Is it a time to be light-hearted, with Edmund wandering about nobody knows where? Why, at this very moment he may be

scalped by the Indians! If you feel in good spirits, I am glad of it; *I* don't. *I* can't forget old friends so easily."

"Will it bring Edmund back to go moaning along and trying to make everybody as doleful as you are yourself? I feel every bit as wretched as you do; but between you and the Fir-tree, who has been sighing and moaning for the last week, I believe I shall go crazy. Can't you think of something to *do*, instead of lamenting? I believe the old Oak is the only one of us who has any sense left. He at least *tries* to be cheerful."

"What do you want me to do? Tell me, and I'll do it," replied the Brook.

"Don't act as if you were centuries old, — an active young fellow like you! Instead of flowing idly along here, can't you go to the Ocean and find out what he knows about the boy?"

"Why didn't I think of that before, I

should like to know?" exclaimed the Brook, roused into sudden animation. "I will start this minute;" and he foamed and bubbled loudly in his impatience to be off; for the impulsive fellow had suddenly become as active and hopeful as a few moments before he had been despondent and gloomy.

"The Ocean may have seen the West-wind since we have," said the white Birch; "and if he has n't, he may have heard something of Edmund from some other source. He has a chance of hearing more than we do."

"Of course he has. Good-by;" and with a dash against a large stone around which he had been mildly flowing, he was over the barrier and rushing along at his greatest speed towards the ocean.

In his headlong course he fell in with many smaller brooks that came to join him. "Come on!" he shouted; "I am

on my way to the ocean;" and as they emptied their milder streams into his foaming current, they became as wild and turbulent as he; and with their added force he grew stronger and broader, and leaped along more madly than ever. Before long, as he approached the ocean and stream after stream joined him, he seemed like a wide river and sent his current far over the meadow-banks.

A fine Rock-maple hailed him as he passed, and he paused for an instant. "What is the matter, that you are in such haste?" she asked.

"I can't stop," replied the Brook; "I am on my way to the Ocean, to learn news of Edmund;" and he chafed at the delay, and foamed harder than ever.

"Oh, yes, dear Edmund!" replied the Rock-maple; "I know about him."

"What do you know of Edmund?" asked the Brook, quickly.

"I know him well," replied the Rock-maple. "He always admired my form, and has often drawn me;" and she moved one of her boughs into a more graceful attitude.

"Do you know where he is now?" asked the Brook, impatiently.

"I have n't the least idea," answered the Rock-maple, trying to catch a glimpse of herself in the surface of the brook.

"Then why did n't you say so before?" retorted the Brook angrily, as he threw himself against the bank and dashed a shower of water over her.

On flew the Brook, enraged at this delay, and dashed headlong down a rocky precipice that stood in his way. At the bottom his path lay between two large rocks, forming a narrow gully through which he usually passed quietly; but in his present mood this was impossible, and with one bound he was through, leaving little streams of

water running down the sides of the old rocks.

"Softly, my young friend, softly!" called out the larger of the rocks; "you will gain nothing by such rash haste. I know you are on your way to the Ocean, to obtain news of Edmund, and perhaps I can help you."

The Brook tried to compose himself; but he bubbled and boiled at the delay.

"The East-wind and the North-wind passed not long ago among the trees here for a few moments. I overheard some of their conversation."

"What did they say?" demanded the Brook, impatiently.

"They agreed to unite their forces and revenge themselves on the men who took Edmund away, I heard them say. I didn't know whom they meant, but you probably do."

"May I be dammed up and turned into

a mill-pond if I know any more than you do!" replied the Brook.

"They evidently knew," replied the old Rock, calmly; "and of one thing you may be sure, — the boy is safe. Take my advice and keep as cool as you can, for fretting and fuming will not help you any."

The Brook started off again, flowing along more quietly, encouraged by the old Rock's words. Edmund was safe, but *where?* That was the question, and the Brook could not rest until it was answered; and in spite of his endeavor to take the matter coolly, before he knew it he was rushing along as madly as ever.

"What is the matter?" called out the trunk of an old Tree that lay across his path.

"Nothing that I know of," replied the Brook, crossly. "Is anything the matter with you?"

"What say? I am a little deaf," answered the old Tree, in a mild voice.

"Nothing!" roared the Brook in his loudest tones, as he dashed himself against the Tree, cleared it with a bound, and was out of hearing before the old Tree had time to recover from his astonishment.

"I declare I ought to be ashamed of myself to answer the old fellow so roughly, when he meant no harm. I'll make it right next time, though," said the Brook to himself, as he went on more quietly.

Fresh sea-breezes were now wafted towards him, cooling his tempestuous feelings and bringing him into a calmer state of mind. The forests, too, were not so dense as before, and he now ran through meadows with hardly a tree in them, then through marshes with tall, coarse grass, until the Brook found himself in the presence of the Ocean.

The Ocean was calm and serene, and

received the noisy little Brook very kindly.

"I can tell you very little," he replied to the Brook's rapid questions. "I can tell you how the 'Nixie' was wrecked. The East-wind and the North-wind each wanted to drive her in a different direction. You know both of them are crotchety fellows, and each was set on having his own way; and between them a violent storm arose and the two boats were swamped. I saw the mate swimming with Edmund to land. The mate shipped again; but Edmund did not go with him. I can tell you no more; but I know who can. The West-wind has been where he is, and the East-wind and the North-wind have gone in that direction."

"I wish I could go too," said the Brook, sadly; "but I can go no farther."

"They will be back before long," said the Ocean, hopefully, "and will tell you all they know."

"How vexed the white Birch will be!" said the Brook to himself, as he reflected on the uselessness of his journey.

All this time the East-wind and the North-wind were rushing along together, driving the clouds before them, and venting their indignation in loud and angry murmurs. As they passed on, they hurled loud blasts among the forest-trees that caused them to rock their lofty heads helplessly, and bowed the slender stalks of the corn-fields almost to the ground. Then all knew that the winds were intent on mischief, and woods and fields were thankful when the angry elements had passed over and left them in safety.

On sped the winds, paying no heed to the questions that assailed them on all sides, over mountain ranges and across the great lakes, which they lashed into foaming oceans. Still driving the clouds before them, they kept on till they reached the

far west, and the dark clouds and violent gales brought terror wherever they went.

At last they settled down over a rough cabin in the woods, in which a party of men were seated at a table, playing at cards. The cabin was filled with smoke from the pipes the men held in their mouths.

One of the men had a maimed eye that gave him a lowering expression, and all presented a coarse and untidy appearance.

As the clouds gathered over the building, the darkness increased until the men could barely distinguish the cards they held in their hands. Then the wind rose higher and higher, and hurled itself against the rough structure until it rocked on its foundation.

Startled at the violence of the wind, the players threw aside their cards and waited for the storm to subside. Louder and louder roared the wind, tossing the forest-trees about until they crashed against one another

with a report like rifle-shots. Faster and faster came the blasts; and with a terrific crash, like a volley of artillery, down went the frail cabin, and the dark clouds poured their floods of water over the frightened inmates.

CHAPTER XV.

MEANWHILE Chief John and his companion were making their way through the forest, stopping only to eat and drink. When night came, they made a fire of dried sticks, to keep off any wild animals that might be prowling about, and placing their backs to a tree and their feet to the fire, rolled themselves up in their blankets, and went to sleep. In this position they could be comfortable during the coldest night.

Soon after sunrise the next morning, they started again, after having partaken of a hasty meal of dried venison and coarse corn-bread. They went along in the silent way common to Indians, Chief John taking the lead; and they continued in this way

until late in the afternoon, when they began to slacken their pace and keep their eyes on the ground.

Chief John suddenly stopped and pointed to a bush whence a bough had been recently broken, for the wood was fresh, as if just severed.

"White man here to-day," he said to his companion.

Then he stooped and carefully examined the ground beneath the bush. A white man would have detected no traces of feet, but the chief said to his companion, —

"Two — three white man."

Again they proceeded, but more cautiously than ever, making no noise as they stepped in their moccasins, and frequently stopping to listen and examine the ground.

Chief John soon stopped again, and picking up the ashes of a pipe, said, —

"Not day old."

After another close inspection of the

ground, they proceed in the same cautious manner, often stopping to listen. Before long, they see before them a dilapidated block hut. The door is open, and the wooden shutters that answer for windows are thrown back on their hinges. Smoke is issuing from the stove-pipe that serves for a chimney.

The Indians conceal themselves behind trees and listen and watch, that they may not come upon the white men until the right moment. Voices issue from the traders' hut, and occasionally a laugh at some coarse joke.

A large man comes to the door and looks out, and the Indians hastily conceal themselves behind the trees again. The man is smoking a clay-pipe, and his heavy face is rendered extremely repulsive by the loss of one eye. The Indians recognize the trader "One-eyed Jack."

Another man joins the first, equally re-

pulsive, with long untidy red hair, and small deeply set eyes that have a most sly expression. In him the Indians recognize "Foxy Jake," another trader. He also is smoking a clay-pipe.

The two men look up at the western sky, where the sun is now setting, and after a few remarks about the weather, re-enter the hut.

A few minutes later Chief John made a sign to his companion, and they issued from their places of concealment, and silently entering the hut, seated themselves on a bench that stood just inside the door. A man stood before a small iron stove at the farther end of the building, stirring a broth that sent forth a savory odor; and the two men who had appeared at the door were seated before a rough table, opening a package of tobacco.

So silent was the entrance of the Indians that the white men were not aware

of their presence until they turned and saw them.

The traders were too well accustomed to the habits of the Indians to manifest any surprise at their appearance, and they continued their occupation for a while.

After some minutes of silence the man called "One-eyed Jack" asked the Indians what they wanted, and if they had anything to trade.

The Indians silently displayed their wares, spreading on the floor their bows and arrows and baskets. The traders examined them, and then One-eyed Jack said, —

"What 'll you take for the lot?"

"Five dollar, two pounds powder, five boxes percussion caps," replied Chief John.

"Oh! get aout!" retorted the trader; "why, the lot ain't worth fifty cents. I 'll tell you what I 'll do, — I 'll give you a bottle of whiskey for the lot."

Chief John quietly enumerated again the articles he was willing to take.

"I'll throw in a pound of powder and call it a trade," said the trader.

"Injun no want whiskey," replied the chief, decidedly. "Whiskey bad for white man, — bad for Injun too. Injun no hunt, no make bows and arrows, no good for any-t'ing when him drink whiskey;" and he prepared to collect his wares.

"What 's your hurry?" asked the trader; "you 'd better think the offer over."

"No t'ink him over," answered the Indian; "heap trading-stations, — Injun no take whiskey."

"Look a' here, Chief!" said the trader, "have n't you got something else to throw in? Why, this lot ain't worth sneezin' at!"

Chief John hesitated a moment; then produced a roll of birch-bark and showed them Edmund's pictures.

The two traders exchanged rapid glances

the moment their eyes fell on the pictures, and they were convinced that the Indians had possession of the boy they had lost. Their knowledge of the Indian character satisfied them that they could expect no information concerning him, and they hoped by a series of cross-questions to obtain some clew to his whereabouts.

"Been lately to the white settlements?" asked the one-eyed man.

Chief John, ignoring the question, said, —

"How much you give for pictures? Heap more in camp."

The white men were so eager to obtain possession of the boy that they offered a good price for the pictures in powder and tobacco. The Indians refused this offer, and after some haggling back and forth, decided to accept some powder, a bag of flour, tobacco, and an axe.

"Been huntin' much this season?" asked the one-eyed man, carelessly.

"Injuns no find game this fall," answered Chief John.

"Find many deer down about the big river?"

"Injun no go to big river, — buck lean down by big river."

"Then I s'pose you camped on the other side of the mountain?"

"Injuns no camp yet, — Injuns hunt; tribe scattered round, — try find game," answered the chief.

"What do you ask for beaver-skins this year?" asked the white man, changing the subject.

"Beaver know heap, — know Injun want him skin, — no want give him skin."

"Have n't you been down to the beaver-dam this season?" asked the trader.

"Injun no go to dam this year; beaver scarce, — have young. Injun go next year. Got few beaver skins, — want pound powder for beaver-skin."

The trader waited awhile, hoping to take the Indian unawares on another subject. Thinking he might find out where the camp was by estimating the distance, he asked, —

"When did you start for this camp?"

The Indian hesitated an instant, and evasively replied, pointing directly overhead, —

"Sun about there when Injuns started. Injuns tired hunting, — no find game, — no start early, — squaws nothing to eat."

Still beating about the bush, the trader asked, —

"When you come round the big bog, did n't you see signs of game there?"

The Indian had no idea of being caught in such a trap, and answered unhesitatingly, without change of feature, —

"Bog in setting sun; Injun come from rising sun, — sun rise that away."

"Old Crowfeather still alive?" asked the trader.

"Yes, him alive."

"Is he hunting with you?"

"Crowfeather goin' make big camp, — no know where him goin' live," replied the Indian, evasively.

After all these answers, the trader suspected that the Indian had tried to mislead him, and came to the conclusion that he must rely on his own sagacity to discover the boy. So after a moment's deliberation he invited the Indians to stay all night, saying that he would go home with them in the morning and see the remainder of the pictures. To this the Indians agreed, and they partook of the hot broth that by that time was cooked.

After supper the traders produced pipes and a bottle of whiskey; but the Indians, suspecting that the traders' intentions were to get them intoxicated and learn their secret when in that condition, wisely refrained from drinking, in spite of the white

men's urgent invitations. At a late hour they prepared for the night. The white men threw themselves down in a corner on a bed made of old potato and flour sacks, and the Indians rolled themselves up in their blankets and lay on the floor by the door of the cabin.

When all had been silent for some time, the two white men cautiously rose and went towards the door. As they passed the Indians, they stooped to examine their faces by the dim light. Satisfied that they were sleeping soundly, they passed out of the hut in the same cautious manner, and retreated to the back of the cabin, where they began a whispered conversation.

No sooner were they there than Chief John threw back his blanket, and without making the slightest sound followed them, concealing himself behind a corner of the building. He could see the two white men standing at a short distance in the dim

moonlight, and his quick ears caught every word of their conversation.

"He 's got the boy; you may bet your life on that," he heard the one-eyed man say.

"But where? — that 's the question," said the other.

"Old Crowfeather 's left in charge of the main camp, and it 's more 'n likely they captured the boy while they was out huntin'. The camp 's too fur off; them picturs was made sence they left the big camp," said the one-eyed man.

"I reckon you 're right, Cap'n," replied the other. "What 's your plan?"

"We 'll go back with 'em in the mornin' to see the rest of the picturs, and find out where the camp 's situated, and try to get hold of some news of the boy," said the one-eyed man.

"A boy that can make sech nat'ral picturs as that is wuth a good deal. His

dad will come down handsome to git him back. Should n't be surprised if he 'd give a thousand dollars to git hold of him ag'in," said the red-haired man.

"A thousand!" sneered the other. "He won't git him back till I see a good ten thousand of his money!"

"How do you propose to go to work?" asked the red-haired man.

"Find out fust jest where he is, then nab him some night when they 're not expectin' us."

"You don't expect they 'll give him up without showin' fight, do you?"

"'T ain't likely their hunting-party numbers more 'n five or six men at the most; and if three well-armed white men ain't a match for six Injuns, it 's a pity," replied the one-eyed man.

"But they 'll suspect we 're after him and hide him out of the way, won't they, Cap'n?"

"We won't give 'em time for 't; we 'll

go home with 'em and offer 'em a good price for their picturs, and you bet they 'll hang on to the goose that lays the golden eggs."

"Injuns is wary devils to deal with," began the red-headed man.

"Yes, Injuns is wary; but brains tells in the long run, and 't won't be the fust time I've outwitted a Injun. We may as well turn in now, for Injuns is early risers, and they 'll make an early start."

When the white men cautiously re-entered the hut, the two Indians were in the same position in which they had been left, evidently in deep slumber.

Heavy breathing from the bed in the corner soon announced that the white men were asleep; and when this sound had continued for some time, the two Indians silently rose, rolled up their blankets, collected the goods they had obtained in exchange for their wares, and noiselessly left the cabin.

By the time the white men awoke from their heavy sleep, the Indians were far on their way to the hunters' camp, travelling with such speed as only Indians can make through the obstructions of a dense forest.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHIEF JOHN was not the only listener to the midnight conversation of the traders. The West-wind lingered about the old cabin, breathing gently, as if he feared to attract the attention of the two men,—roaming lightly about between the cabin and the forest, as if he communicated to the trees what the white men were plotting; and the trees rustled their leaves softly, and a mild murmur ran through them, as if in sympathy with his whispered words.

The declining hunter's Moon, too, kept her watchful eyes on the pair, and her face wore a sad expression, as if she regretted her waning light and wished she might linger to aid the unfortunate boy against whom these wicked men were plotting. The evening star shone out brighter than

ever, as though it would say, "Do not look so sad, old friend! We will all help to light the lonely boy on his way." And star after star, twinkling brighter than ever, seemed to answer, "And I;" "And I;" "And I."

The shining Milky Way seemed to grow broader and broader, as if it were trying to tell what it could do; and the Northern Lights flashed brightly up in the clear sky, as if to outdo the others.

All this the West-wind heard, and seemed to answer, —

"We will all help; and if need be, the North-wind can come down from the lakes with one of his heavy fogs, and blind the pursuers."

The disappointment of the traders at finding the Indians gone was great.

"We 'd ought to have know'd the deceitful critturs better, and kept a watch over 'em, so as to foller 'em," said the red-headed man.

"Foller an Injun!" sneered the one-eyed man. "'T ain't so easy as you think. They 'd have led us in jest the opposite way to where the boy is, and then given us the slip, and had him hid out of the way before we knew they was gone."

"What do you propose to do about it?" asked the other, who always had a profound respect for his companion's sagacity.

"Outwit him, if we can, though 't ain't the easiest thing alive to outwit a Injun. Fust we 'll try the beaver-dam."

"But he said they was n't huntin' beavers this fall, — that they was scarce," replied the red-headed man.

"When you 've hed as much experience with Injuns as I 've hed, Jake, you 'll l'arn to take 'em by the opposite of what they says. He said they war n't huntin' beavers this season, — that they was scarce; well, to my mind, that means that they *be* huntin' 'em, and that there 's plenty of 'em. He

'lowed that he had some skins, and wanted a pound of powder apiece for 'em. So to the beaver-dam we 'll go fust."

The three men lost no time in preparation, and in a short time they were equipped with guns, ammunition, and food enough to sustain them for a few days.

Locking the cabin, the three started on their expedition, the one-eyed man taking the lead. They could not follow a trail as the Indians did. Boughs bent out of place and twigs snapped off had no meaning for them; nor could they trace, as the Indians could, the impress of feet on the grassy turf or on dead leaves. They had their landmarks, such as oddly shaped trees, large rocks, brooks, rivers, etc.; but without the instinct the Indians possessed to guide them, their progress was slow.

Chief John had told them that they had started at noon. If that were true, the hunting-camp could not be very far off.

But the traders were by no means sure of the fact; it might have been in the morning, or the night before, or possibly the morning of the day before. That they had spent a night on the journey seemed probable, as they had their blankets with them.

When night came on, the traders found themselves still far from the beaver-dam; and making a fire, they went to sleep in the manner of the Indians, with their feet towards it and their backs against trees. In the morning they started early, and by noon found themselves approaching the dam. Now they proceeded with great caution, creeping through the woods as stealthily as they could, often stopping to listen. By degrees they reached the edge of the forest, and the beaver-dam lay before them.

Not a wigwam was in sight, and not a living creature, with the exception of two

black, round heads that bobbed up from the water and stared curiously at the intruders.

Much as they would have liked to obtain the skins of the beavers, the men dared not fire, for fear of warning the Indians, should any be about there, of their approach. They silently skirted the dam, but neither camp nor trace of a camp could they discover.

"'T ain't any use to try t' other side of the mountain, Cap'n, I s'pose?" the red-haired man ventured to suggest, as the one-eyed man pondered on the best course to pursue.

"I don't know why 't ain't," he answered; "the Injuns 'lowed the game was lean there, and 't was n't no use lookin' there for 'em. Yes, I 'm for tryin' t' other side the mountain."

The place referred to was not many hours' journey from the beaver-dam; and they reached it late at night, footsore and weary, only to find disappointment once more, —

for no trace of an Indian encampment was to be seen. Weary and cross, the disappointment was even greater than before; and while the leader of the party was considering what to do next, the other two men conferred together in low tones, which gradually grew louder, until their discontented expressions reached the ears of their leader.

"What 're you grumblin' about?" he asked, looking, with a scowl, from one to the other of the dissatisfied men.

"We 've come all this way for nothin'," replied the red-headed man, sulkily, "and we 've come to the conclusion that we 've had 'bout enough of it."

"You hev n't come any further than I hev, I reckon. Don't you s'pose my feet can feel sore as well as yours?"

"I would n't mind my feet feelin' sore, if you 'd make it wuth while, Cap'n," said the third man, who seldom joined in the conver-

sation; "but when there ain't nothing to be gained by it, why, I'd ruther be back in camp."

"Who said there was n't nothing to be gained?" demanded the leader, fiercely. "Did you ever know the time when One-eyed Jack refused to go shares with his mates, when he made a good job?"

"I hain't no great fault to find on that score," answered the other; "but finding the boy is oncertain, and then if we do find him, it 's jest as oncertain whether there 's any money in it, — his folks may be poor."

"Them 's jest *my* sentiments, Cap'n," assented the red-haired man. "It 's an oncertain job any way you put it. The boy ain't found yet, and we don't know as there 's any money to be had when he is found."

"He 'll *be* found before many days is past," asserted the one-eyed man, "if he 's in the land o' the livin'; and as for money, if his

guv'nor has n't got the money we want for him, you may depend on 't that some of his folks has. Do you think a boy like him, that talks as good as a dictionary, was n't brought up 'mongst rich folks ?"

"There 's something in that, Cap'n," responded the red-haired man, who was always influenced by the superior mind of his leader.

"Things don't look cheerful on an empty stomach," said the Captain, "so let 's have a bite, and a good night's sleep on top of it; and if things don't look more promising in the morning, I 'm mistaken."

This advice was acted upon; and after satisfying their appetites the tired men rolled themselves in their blankets, and slept soundly all night.

The leader of the party was the first to awake; and when the others opened their eyes, they found him seated on a log at a short distance, deep in thought.

"I 've thought it all out, boys," he said, as they joined him, "and I 've come to the conclusion to try the big swamp. It seems nat'ral, now I think of it, that the Injuns would be likely to put the swamp between them and anybody that might be s'arching for 'em. It's a fust-rate place to lose your way in, and a place they 'd nat'rally choose."

"However can we git round it?" asked the others. "Do you know the way, Cap'n?"

"As well as I know the nose on my face," he answered; "I camped over there one season, and I 'm acquainted with every foot of the land."

The night's sleep had greatly refreshed the party; and after a hasty breakfast they started off in the direction of the big swamp, with spirits greatly revived. Early in the evening of the next day they reached the outskirts of the swamp, and halted for a rest.

The leader of the party, whose physical and mental powers seemed untiring, started out on a tour of investigation. Late at night he returned, and his confident manner announced to his companions that he had obtained important information.

"Good news, boys!" he exclaimed, as he threw himself down beside them; "I 've found 'em. They 're not three mile away from here, and I 've had my eyes on the very boy we 're looking for."

"You 're a trump, Cap'n!" exclaimed his companions, regarding their leader with admiration.

"I crept along where the grass is soft by the brook," explained the one-eyed man, "till I got opposite the camp. The grass was so soft I could tread without making noise enough even for a Injun to hear me. The brook made a thunderin' racket, though, and I thought sometimes the Injuns must notice it, for it did go like all possessed."

"They 're used to it, most likely," said the red-haired man, "and did n't notice it. Brooks does make a awful noise sometimes."

"Well, the Injuns did n't take the alarm," continued the leader; "and as I said, I got opposite the camp, down where the woods was thickest, and hid where they could n't see me. The camp 's up on a hill, and the sky was kind of clouded over; and as luck would have it, jest as I was considerin' whether 't would be safe to ventur any nigher, out come the stars, and I could see the camp quite plain."

"You see the boy?" asked both of his companions together.

"I see the boy," answered the leader. "The chief's wigwam was nighest me, and I see the boy standin' in the doorway as plain as I see you two."

"When do you plan to nab him?" asked the one-eyed man.

"To-night. He 's there now, in the

chief's tent; and 't is n't safe for us to stay here after to-night, or they 'll scent us out and take him off under our very noses."

Soon after midnight the three men started for the hunting-camp, creeping stealthily along the course of the brook until the leader stopped and signalled to them to keep back. No noise was to be heard but the wind swaying the tree-tops, and the loud rushing of the brook as it hurried foaming over the stones that lay in its path.

"It beats all what a racket that brook makes!" said the one-eyed man in a whisper; "Niagara Falls is nothin' to it."

The sleeping Indian camp lay silent before them, dark, except for the half-burnt-out fires that glowed in front of the wigwams. The west-wind had blown all day; but as night came on, a colder temperature prevailed, with a wind that gradually increased in force.

The men stood gazing at the camp in

silence. Not a soul was to be seen. The leader of the little party took a step forward and stood still. The tallest forest-trees clashed together with a loud report.

"The wind has changed," he explained to his companions in a low tone. "The north-wind will serve our turn better. The more racket the trees make, the less chance of their hearing us."

By degrees the wind rose, and black clouds gathered over the camp, shutting out the light of the moon and stars. Only the dimly burning fires now gave light to the camp.

Cautiously up the hill crept the three men, holding their guns in the hollow of their arms, and stopping every moment to listen. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night but the crashing of the forest-trees and the loud roaring of the brook.

Heavier and blacker grow the clouds that have settled over the sleeping camp. The

three creeping figures have reached the wigwam of the chief, and stand immovable for an instant; then the leader cautiously approaches the open entrance, and beckons to his companions to approach. The three men enter in the same silent manner, and a moment later the whole camp seems alive. The shrieking of women and children is heard above the crashing of the wind and the crackling of rifles; and a blinding fog settles down over the camp, shutting out all objects.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE traders found all silent in the wigwam. By the dim light they descried the indistinct outlines of the sleeping Indians, lying motionless in their blankets; and the white men groped their way to the back of the tent, where in one corner lay a figure they thought to be the boy they sought.

The one-eyed man stooped to examine more closely the indistinct features; and at the instant up started the sleeping Indians, and in a moment more the air resounded with the cries of terrified women and children.

Not desiring to shed blood unless absolutely necessary, and intent only on capturing the boy, the white men had hoped to seize him and bear him off before the In-

dians were aroused; but the alarm being given, the whole camp was in commotion before they had attained their object.

The fog closed in denser and denser, and soon it became so dark that they could see neither friends nor enemies. Now they seize a dark object that turns out to be one of their own party, and again they run against a stump or tree, and loud imprecations mingle with the roaring of the brook and the crashing of the wind through the trees. Several shots are fired at random, but no one is hit.

For a second the fog lifts, and the stars are seen, disclosing dark figures lurking behind trees; but when the white men seek to reach them, the blinding fog settles down heavier than before, and they grope helplessly about in the darkness.

The fierce North-wind blows the fog aside for an instant, and the whole camp is seen, disclosing wigwams blown down and their

contents scattered, with not an Indian in sight; then a drenching rain pours down, soon turning to sleet and hail, and the white men are driven to seek the forest. In their mad rush for a shelter, they become separated, and vainly endeavor to find one another by calling; but their voices are lost in the wild roar of the elements, and the sound is so blown out of its course by the wind that they can form no conception of each other's whereabouts.

The anxious inquiry, "Where are you, Cap'n?" is thrown back from the echo on the mountain by many voices, that seem to mock them in their misery. Intent only on reaching a shelter from the drenching rain and cutting sleet, each seeks the first cover that offers itself, and waits for the storm to abate.

All this time the boy for whom this expedition was undertaken was safe under the guidance of his friend, the young Indian.

Early in the evening, when all were asleep in their camp, the young Indian was awakened by a breath of the West-wind fanning his cheek. Opening his eyes, he saw the stars shining in through the opening of the wigwam; and as he gazed, they seemed to beckon to him to come forth. The bright Evening Star stood over the wigwam where the white boy lay asleep, and to the Indian's imagination seemed to direct him there. The Brook, too, murmured loudly as he hastened on his way to the river; and obeying these voices of Nature, the young Indian crept lightly to the wigwam over which the Evening Star kept watch, and looked in through the open door.

All was silent. The white boy lay on his bed of fir-boughs by the entrance, quietly sleeping, his calm face shining white in the faint starlight; and the young Indian, bending over him, touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"The two hurried along as rapidly as they could, the Indian taking the lead." — *Page* 251.

Hastily opening his eyes, and seeing the Indian's face so close to his, the boy felt no fear, for he knew his friend had come to keep his promise and take him home.

"Evening Star say time come for take white boy home," whispered the Indian, softly. "White boy step soft, — follow Injun."

Edmund quickly obeyed, and followed his guide without a moment's hesitation. The silent pair stole softly through the camp, and descended the hill till they reached the brook, that now rushed along more madly than ever.

"Brook say, 'Follow me,' — brook go that away," said the Indian, pointing in the direction the foaming water was rushing; "Injun go that away too."

The two hurried along as rapidly as they could; the Indian taking the lead, helping the boy over hard places, and bending back boughs that obstructed the way.

"Brook go through swamp, — Injun go through swamp too. White man go round swamp, — him too fool find Injun in swamp," explained the Indian.

"Do you think they will find us?" asked Edmund, anxiously.

"White man no find Injun," replied the young Indian, confidently. "West-wind say, 'Injun, white man come for white boy.' Evening Star say, 'Take white boy away where white man no find him.' Brook say, 'Come this away,' — Injun know what him means."

"That 's the way they talk to me," said Edmund; "the old oak at home used to be a real comfort to me when I was unhappy. Do you think I 'll see them all again soon?"

"Home far away, — heap miles away. Injun take white boy to railroad; then him go back to tribe, white boy go home."

They proceeded silently for a while, making their way through the dense underbrush

with difficulty. After a while the Indian remarked pointing behind him, —

"Big fog that away, — north-wind blow down from lakes. Fog not this away, — stars show Injun way;" and as he spoke the stars seemed to shine brighter than ever, and the northern lights flashed up over the tall tree-tops. The hunter's moon too appeared, and seemed to look approvingly down on the pair, — lighting up the dark eyes and swarthy skin of the young Indian, and bringing into strong relief the outlines of his agile figure, as he lightly sprang across the marshy places and extended a helping hand to his charge; and as Edmund glanced up at his dark face, his confident manner inspired him with new courage, and redoubled his energy.

At last a rain set in, and the Indian continued more rapidly, keeping the boy's hand in his, to help him along faster on his way.

"No go far in swamp. Injun know where cave, — keep white boy warm. Injun take food in cave heap days ago; know white man come soon for take white boy away, — wait till West-wind say, 'Come,'" said the Indian.

The Indian spoke truly. In a short time the dreary swamp was crossed, and the pair found themselves in front of a clear lake. Still leading the tired boy, the Indian stopped in front of a large rock, before which a broad hemlock grew. Thrusting aside the thick branches, an opening was disclosed, and they entered a good-sized cave. Dry fir-boughs were piled up into a soft bed on one side; and pointing to them, the Indian said, —

"White boy sleep there. White man no find way here, — white man go round swamp; four, five, three days that away."

Edmund took the Indian's advice, and threw himself on the boughs, the Indian lying by his side; but the excited con-

dition of the boy's nerves kept him awake long after the Indian's quiet and regular breathing announced him to be asleep.

Silent as the woods are in the daytime, at night they are as noisy as the streets of a large city, except that they are peopled with animals instead of human beings, — all of them out seeking a living. The wind howls dismally through the forest, sometimes dying away for an instant, with only the chirp of some belated cricket to break the stillness, then gradually rising by degrees until it reaches its height, and hurling itself against the tallest forest-trees until they rock like slender saplings, occasionally a sharp report arising as a sturdy limb is torn asunder.

At last the wind grows gradually less, and the noises of the forest become more distinct. Edmund begins to doze; and as his mind gradually becomes unconscious, a large owl, lighting on the hemlock-tree

in front of the cave, suddenly gives three loud hoots, and he starts up in terror. The Indian rouses, and explains sleepily, —

"Big screech-owl, — him no hurt white boy. White boy sleep, — start when morning come."

This Edmund tries to do; but the whole forest is so alive with sounds that he can but listen. A little hedgehog keeps up its faint squeak just outside the cave, and the whining bark of foxes is heard at intervals. He shuts his eyes tightly, and tries to sleep, when his eyelids suddenly fly open as a long-drawn howl reaches his ears.

"What is that noise?" he exclaims, clutching the Indian, who lies quietly by his side.

"Wolf howl — heap far away in forest. Wolf knows heap, — no come where Injun is, no come this away," is the reassuring answer of the sleepy Indian, who immediately continues his broken slumber.

The white boy's excited imagination pictures wolves prowling about the wilderness in search of food, and in spite of the Indian's assertion that they are too knowing to venture near an Indian encampment, is not wholly reassured. He lies listening for a repetition of the sound. It comes again after a while, but more distant; again it comes, but so far off and faint that he can hardly hear the cry.

Again the excited boy closes his eyes, and resolves to open them no more. The sounds grow fainter and fainter, and a gentle doze is by degrees stealing upon him, when suddenly there arose a shriek so long and loud, so like a human voice in distress, that the terrified boy starts to his feet, exclaiming, —

"They're coming, they're coming! Don't let them take me away!"

The Indian quietly puts his hand on the terrified boy's shoulder, saying soothingly, —

"White boy lie still; white man no come here, — loon going fly soon."

"But what was that frightful noise?" cries Edmund, in distress. "It was somebody in agony. Some one must be dreadfully hurt to make a noise like that."

"White man no make noise, Injun no make noise either. Loon going fly soon, — wait till wind changes, cry again bime-by, fly when morning come," explains the Indian.

"Where is it?" asks Edmund, somewhat reassured by the Indian's manner and explanation. "It sounded right in front of the cave."

"Loon on lake, — wait till wind change," repeats the Indian. "White boy look out, see big loon sitting on water."

Edmund pushes aside the hemlock-boughs that obstruct the entrance to the cave, and looks out. The rain has ceased, and the lake lies calm and serene in the moonlight.

"There big loon, — cry again soon," says the Indian.

Sitting on the water, with its long neck stretched out and its broad wings flapping, waiting for the wind to change, is a large bird which Edmund has never before seen. As he looks, again comes the piercing cry.

"Him sit there till wind change, then him fly," says the Indian. "Now white boy sleep."

The white boy did sleep at last in earnest, and so deep was his slumber that even the flying of the loon in the morning failed to wake him. The Indian roused him soon after sunrise, and told him it was time to start.

The woods, so full of discordant sounds during the night, were now silent except for the rustling of the leaves in the light breeze; and the boy ate the food that the Indian set before him, and was eager to continue his journey.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EDMUND and the young Indian started again on their journey, the Indian carrying a large package. As Edmund had not seen it before, he manifested surprise, and the Indian answered, —

"White boy want money when him come to white settlement, — him have no money. Injun no have money either. Injun make bows and arrows, — make moccasins too, — bring 'em in cave, sell 'em to white peoples, — then white boy have money take him home."

"When I get home, I know my uncle will pay you for all you've done for me," said the boy, warmly.

"Injun no want pay. White boy love forest, — know what moon say, know what

wind say too. Injun know what him say too. White boy make pictures of sky, — make pictures of brook. Injun too fool make pictures, — pictures in Injun's heart, no make 'em on bark."

"I know what you mean," said Edmund, his face glowing with enthusiasm. "We both love the same things; the only difference is that I make them again, while the pictures stay in your heart."

"That what Injun mean; him have Injun tongue, no say what him feel, — heart white if tongue Injun."

"Yes, our hearts are alike," replied Edmund. "You understand me better than any one else."

Late that evening the two travellers stopped before an empty cabin that had been used as a trading-station, and there they passed the night. At sunrise the next morning they started again, and after a few hours' journey they struck the

railroad. Following it for a while, they by degrees approached a white settlement.

Now and then cultivated land appeared, and at intervals a log-cabin, and finally a railroad-station.

Edmund's heart beat fast as his eyes fell on a brilliantly tinted hand-bill pasted against the rough boards of the depot. Pictures of lions and tigers, spirited horses with exceedingly arched necks, ladies in gauzy attire leaping through hoops wreathed with roses and hoops flaming with fire, an educated pig pondering over an alphabet placed before him, a musical seal pensively turning a hand-organ, — these and many other such pictures that so greatly delight boys' hearts, reminded Edmund that he had at last returned to civilization.

Both of the travellers forgot their weariness in the pleasing occupation of examining these fascinating hand-bills; and Edmund

read that that very afternoon an exhibition of the wonders of the circus would be given in that town.

"Injun sell bows and arrows mebbe. Heap white peoples come see show, — come heap miles away," said the Indian.

The Indian was right. As they entered the town (one of those cities that spring up so suddenly in the far West), they saw people arriving from all directions, — some from the railroad, others on foot, looking as if they had walked many weary miles, and some in wagons of every description, — all intent on seeing the show.

The little town, with its roughly boarded houses, presented a very gala appearance; and Edmund rejoiced to be again among people of his own color.

Rude booths, with glasses of lemonade and plates of cookies and gingerbread arranged temptingly on the counters, and bottles of ginger-ale and root-beer packed

in tubs of cracked ice, stood at every corner.

The two travellers followed the crowd of people that were all going in one direction; and before long the large circus-tent with its festoons of many-colored flags appeared in sight, and later the smaller tents of the side shows, with life-sized representations of the living curiosities exhibited within, painted on large sheets of canvas and hung up in front of each tent. The largest woman on earth, the smallest woman on earth, the man skeleton, the fattest man living, the man without arms who wrote and made pictures and played on musical instruments, the troupe of wonderful performing dogs, the minstrel troupe, — all these representations, elegantly colored without regard to expense, were almost as satisfactory as the living subjects they represented.

From the minstrels' tent could be heard,

at one moment comic songs and shouts of laughter from the appreciative audience, and the next instant there would be dead silence as a song was heard commemorating some dying relative's last request, or a banjo accompaniment to the memory of somebody's Nelly who had been torn from his side by violence.

The sounds of a harp and violin issuing from one tent, a cornet and piano from another, and an accordion from a third, gave a festive atmosphere to the whole scene that would stir any boy's heart to its depths.

An occasional roar from the lion or tiger, or a bellow from the sea-lion added greatly to the enjoyment of the scene ; and some of the more fortunate caught an occasional glimpse of a horse's tail or foot, as he passed from his quarters through the covered passage-way that led into the large performing-tent.

Taking in all these wonders, the young Indian soon bethought himself of the object that brought him there, and joining the various traders stationed on the outskirts of the circus-ground with their wares, selected a favorable spot and opened his package. His well-made bows and arrows and moccasins found favor in the eyes of the crowd, and he made many sales, Edmund receiving the money and making change for him.

Stationed near by, was a man cutting profiles out of paper for those who desired likenesses of themselves. These found great favor in the eyes of the crowd, and he could not keep pace with the demand for pictures that constantly increased.

Edmund had never seen profiles cut in this manner; but curiosity led him to watch the process, and he pressed as near the artist as the crowd about him would permit.

"Can't you hurry up matters a little?" asked a farmer, who had been patiently awaiting his turn; "me and the old woman want our likenesses took if it's a possible thing."

"I've been waiting about an hour already," said a pretty girl, who had been passing the time in arranging the blue and pink ribbons that adorned her fichu into a more becoming position; "and if my turn does n't come soon, I'm going into the circus."

"In jest a few minutes, ladies and gentlemen," answered the artist, encouragingly, — "jest as soon as your turn comes. Unfortunately I can't do but one picture to onst."

Edmund pressed to the man's side. "If you will give me a pair of scissors and some paper, I can help you," he said modestly.

"You!" exclaimed the man, looking in astonishment at the boy.

He did present a peculiar appearance,

clad partly in the clothes he had on at the time of the shipwreck, and partly in garments supplied by the Indians.

"I don't know about your making *picturs;* but one thing is sartain, — you 'd make a uncommon good scarecrow."

Edmund was not deterred from his purpose by the laugh that the artist's joke created.

"I know I can do it, if you will let me try," he repeated, "and these people will not have to wait so long."

"It may be fun for you," said the artist, "but I can't afford to lose good trade by having folks go away dissatisfied."

"Oh, let the youngster try!" called out a young man. "Try my portrait, sonny, and if you spoil my beauty, I 'll bear the expense. Come, old feller, give the youngster a pair of scissors and a sheet of paper."

Thus adjured, the profile artist complied, and Edmund received his materials with de-

light. Occasionally glancing at the young man as his scissors moved rapidly, before the artist himself had finished the picture he began at the same time, the boy handed his picture to the young man.

"Well, I'm blessed if the youngster has n't hit it!" he exclaimed, as he held up his portrait.

There was his face clearly outlined; his slouched hat looking as natural as life, and his long cigar protruding from one side of his heavily mustached mouth.

The artist examined the picture with astonishment, but refrained from expressing his approbation of work that far excelled anything he could do.

Edmund was kept busy now. His next attempt was the old man and his wife. These were pleasing subjects, and he brought out the strong lines of the old couple with striking effect.

"That's what I call nat'ral," exclaimed

the old man, as he critically examined his picture. "I ain't ashamed of my age; and when I have my pictur took, I want to see it look like a man of my years, and not with a smooth face like a young feller of twenty."

The pretty girl was Edmund's next subject; and he soon handed her a likeness that was received with great satisfaction, — for there was her face as she saw it so many times every day in her looking-glass, a conscious smile playing about the pretty mouth.

The artist was secretly delighted to find he had come upon such a prize. The boy was evidently poor, he reasoned, and would not make objection to any compensation he might offer him; and with such decided talent as his, he could increase his business greatly. Very likely the boy could make colored portraits that would bring him in more money than the profile-cutting. He

resolved to make a bargain with him after business was over.

Edmund worked away industriously, delighted at the chance to practise his favorite occupation. Meanwhile the Indian sold his goods; and when the circus was over and the crowd had dispersed, he joined Edmund once more.

The artist was making the boy an offer to travel with him, and proposed a very small sum in compensation for what the boy was to do in return. This Edmund was ready to accept, thankful for any opportunity to earn money to take him home; but his Indian friend interposed.

"White man no give money enough," he said decidedly. "White boy make pictures, — sell 'em to white peoples for heap money."

"Oh, nonsense!" said the artist, good-naturedly; "such a boy as that can't expect to get much for his work."

"Expect heap!" replied the Indian, indignantly. "White boy make great medicine man one day, make heap picture now, — make picture moon, make picture stars, make picture woods; white peoples give heap money for picture. Injun make bow and arrow; white peoples give money for 'em. Injun give money to white boy, — take him home."

The artist listened attentively to the last words of the young Indian, and a sudden thought entered his mercenary mind. Perhaps the boy had been stolen, and if a reward were offered for his recovery, it would be well to secure it. The boy, in spite of his poor clothes, had a refined air, and very likely came of wealthy parents.

"Where is the boy's home?" he asked.

"Home far away," replied the Indian, — "heap mile away. Injun stay with white boy till make money take him home, — then Injun go back to tribe."

"I have it!" said the artist to himself. "Why in the world did n't I think of it before?" But he only said aloud: "I 'll make it worth your while to stay with me. The boy's worth as much to me as anybody, and I 'm willing to pay for 't."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE sudden thought that occurred to the profile artist was this. Some weeks before, while stopping in one of the Western cities, the following poster met his eye: —

Boy lost! Two thousand dollars' reward! Boy of twelve years, named Edmund Merton. Large for his years, — brown eyes, brown hair, dark complexion with red cheeks. Has talent for drawing. When last seen was in the city of L——, making pictures for his support. Is supposed to have been taken west by the men in whose company he was last seen. Any one giving the undersigned any definite information concerning the missing boy will receive the above reward.

HENRY MERTON.

"That's the youngster, you may depend on 't!" said the profile artist to himself. "'Talent for drawing,' — that's just what he 's got. 'T is n't every boy can make pic-

turs as nat'ral as life. I won't let him know I suspect who he is, or he 'll be giving me the slip. Most likely he run away from home on account of some family difficulty, — gov'ner would n't let him go to sea, or something of that kind. I 'll write to the old man, and hang onto the youngster till he turns up, and it 'll be the easiest two thousand dollars *I* ever made."

These were the profile artist's thoughts, but he took care to keep them to himself.

"I 'll tell you what I 'll do," he said aloud; "I 'll give you three dollars a week, though it 's double what it 's worth."

Edmund would have accepted any offer, so impatient was he to begin to earn something; but his Indian friend possessed more shrewdness.

"No enough money!" he exclaimed, shaking his head resolutely. "White boy no go with white man, — him go with Injun. Injun make bow and arrow; white boy

make picture, — make so much money him wants."

This plan did not suit the profile artist. The boy's unusual talent had already gained him considerable reputation, and he would prove a dangerous rival should he leave him and set up in business for himself, aided too by the young Indian, who was very popular with the public.

"Well, then, call it four dollars a week, though I sha'n't make a cent on it. I'm willing to give the boy a start."

"Four dollar no enough money," said the Indian, with another resolute shake of the head, and turning to go.

"Well, then, four dollars and a quarter," replied the profile artist, "though it's more 'n any one else would give."

"No enough money," repeated the Indian, doggedly.

"Well, then, call it four dollars and a half. I shall lose by it anyway, and a

quarter of a dollar won't make much difference."

"No enough money," still repeated the young Indian, resolutely. "White boy great medicine man one day, — make heap money. Give five dollar and white boy stay."

The profile artist considered a moment, and the Indian quietly tied his bundle more securely together. The artist saw that he was determined, and not willing to let the prize slip through his fingers, said with a groan, —

"Well, then, call it five; but it 's more 'n I make myself."

The Indian laid down his bundle.

"Then white boy stay," he replied.

When Edmund's uncle, a few days later, received the profile artist's letter, he handed it to his wife to read.

"Of course you will go at once," she said.

"I don't know," he replied. "It will turn

out like all the rest. I shall be shown a boy I never saw before, and shall be vexed to think I have taken the journey for nothing."

"Don't say for nothing!" exclaimed his wife. "Think of the poor motherless boy wandering about among strangers! It is surely neglecting a great duty to leave any chance untried."

"It will be a good lesson for him to have to look out for himself for a while," replied her husbaud. "Why did n't he stay where I put him, instead of running away and getting himself into trouble? He was safe enough there."

"I know he never ran away without reason," replied his wife, warmly. "How could a sensitive boy like Edmund be happy with such a hard old man?"

"'T was the only way *I* knew of making a man of him. Perhaps when he comes back, he 'll be willing to do something more useful than make senseless daubs."

"Those 'senseless daubs' have served him a good turn. It makes my heart ache to think of the poor boy thrown on his own resources at his age, and selling his pictures to buy food. What could Fred do if he had been the one?"

"Fred would have sense enough to stay where he was put," said Mr. Merton. "He will make a capital business man one of these days."

"Edmund is much more industrious than Fred is," replied his wife, "and always tried harder to please you; but his nature is a different one, and I think we ought to cultivate the talent that has been given him, instead of trying to change his nature. We are not all made in one mould fortunately, and the world would be a cheerless place to live in if some natures did not possess the power of bringing out the beautiful in Nature that practical natures do not see."

"If you can see any beauty in those fool-

ish pictures Edmund always had lying about the house, you 're welcome to; only don't try to argue me into thinking a boy like that is going to make a smart man."

"You will go to find the boy this travelling artist speaks of, won't you? You have too good a heart to allow the poor child to suffer any longer than is necessary."

"I suppose it will end in my going," replied Mr. Merton; "but I know just how it will turn out." And his wife, knowing that his heart was kinder than his words implied, felt a great weight taken from her heart.

Meanwhile Edmund and the young Indian remained with the profile artist, who followed in the wake of the circus. The Indian made his bows and arrows industriously, and in every town where they halted, added something to the little pile of money laid aside for Edmund's journey home. He had become so attached to his little protégé that

he never allowed him out of his sight, fearing that he might be taken away from him. This affection Edmund returned most heartily, and the two friends became every day more and more inseparable.

Edmund and the young Indian had been with the travelling artist about two weeks, when, after an unusually busy afternoon, soon after they returned to the inn where they lodged, a knock was heard at the door of the little room they occupied.

Edmund had, a moment before, gone to the artist's room to confer with him regarding some pictures he was making, and the Indian opened the door. A tall gentleman, a stranger, stood there, and asked to see the boy who roomed there.

The young Indian, who lived in constant fear that the white boy would be again kidnapped, at once suspected that this stranger was some one acting in the interest of the traders, and put himself on his guard.

"White boy no here," he said, emphatically shaking his head.

"They told me at the office that he had just gone up to his room," said the stranger.

"Man in office say too much lie, — white boy no here," repeated the Indian.

"I am his uncle. I have come more than a thousand miles to take him home," said the stranger.

This assertion did not convince the Indian, and he persistently replied, —

"White boy heap mile away, — five, ten, six mile away; him come back some day, mebbe, — then Injun take him to him home."

"Stand aside, and let me pass!" said the stranger, sternly. "I know a white boy is here; and if he is not the one I seek, I do not want him."

"White boy no here, — heap mile away where tribe is, — make great medicine man one day," persisted the Indian.

The stranger, in his turn suspicious that the Indian had reasons for concealing the boy, that his friends might not obtain possession of him, resolved to penetrate the mystery at once. He placed his hand on the door to force it open; but the active young Indian was on the alert, and had it firmly braced, so that he could not stir it.

At that moment, when affairs had taken so serious a turn, steps were heard coming along the passage-way, that the quick ear of the young Indian at once recognized, and he loosed his hold of the door. At the same moment there came a joyful cry of "Uncle! Uncle!" and the stranger suddenly turned.

The young Indian's keen eye took in the situation at once. The boy, so long absent from home, was full of joy at seeing his uncle; but the uncle, although pleased to see his nephew, showed a reserve of manner, after the surprise of the first greeting, that made it evident to the Indian that some-

thing did not please him, and his intelligent dark eyes roved anxiously from one face to the other.

"How is it about your running away from the farmer, where I put you?" asked the uncle, when he had answered the rapid questions Edmund put to him concerning the family at home.

"I ran away because he was unkind to me, uncle," replied the boy.

"I've always considered him a just man," replied his uncle. "He tells me he treated you as well as he knew how, and you ran away in the night."

"He did n't treat me as well as he knew how," replied the boy, looking up at his uncle with his honest eyes. "He made me work in the field from morning till night. That I did n't mind, for I was willing to work; but when he took my paper and pen and ink and paint-box away, and locked me up in my attic with bread and water only, I

stood it as long as I could, and then I made up my mind to get away and go home to you; for I knew you never meant for him to treat me so harshly."

"Shut you up, and kept you on bread and water, did he? He did n't mention that," said his uncle, looking keenly at him.

"Yes, and he took away my money too, and he 's got it now. I really did n't mean any harm, uncle. I worked hard all day; and when evening came, I was so lonesome and longed so to see you all and the old place, that I could bear it better if I made pictures of what I wanted to see so much."

"How happened you to go to sea?" asked his uncle, whose manner had somewhat softened before the boy's earnestness.

"I did n't have any money, and the captain of the 'Nixie' promised to take me home if I would go with him. Then after the shipwreck I made a little money by making pictures of people, and then some

men found out about me and promised to take me home. They did n't, though; and when I found out how they 'd cheated me and what bad men they were, I left 'em. Then this Indian found me, and took me home with him."

CHAPTER XX.

WHILE this conversation was taking place between Edmund and his uncle, the young Indian had stood silently watching them, various emotions filling his heart, — pleasure, certainly, that the boy had at last found his friends, and at the same time regret that he was to lose the companion who had become so dear to him.

Edmund, always sensitive to the moods of others, soon caught a glimpse of the young Indian's face, and understood at once what was passing through his mind.

"Uncle, I can't tell you what this Indian has done for me," he said, seizing his friend's hand and drawing him forward. "If it had n't been for him, I should have been taken away by those dreadful men.

He took me safely through the forest, and hid me when they tried to get me back. He 's been selling bows and arrows to get money to take me home. When I 'm a man I shall do something to pay him back for all he 's done for me."

"We 'll see what can be done," said his uncle.

At that moment the profile artist made his appearance.

"Glad you 've turned up," he said, rubbing his hands gleefully as he thought of the reward that was now his. "That was a lucky thought of mine, to hang onto the youngster till you arrived. I thought it better to keep dark on the subject, for fear he might give us the slip."

"Have you expended anything on my nephew?" asked the stranger, whose shrewd eyes seemed to understand how matters stood.

"I don't mind losing a trifle on his board,"

replied the artist. "Of course a boy of that age is n't of much use. I jest gave him something to do to keep him out of mischief."

The pensive expression that the young Indian's face had worn at thought of the white boy's leaving him, deserted him at these words, and his dark eyes gleamed indignantly.

"White man say too much lie!" he exclaimed violently. "White boy heap use; make picture so much him can, — make heap better picture than white man."

"Oh, come now!" said the profile artist; "you don't expect anybody to believe that a boy like that can make as good pictures as a man that 's worked at it all his life?"

"Heap better picture!" asserted the Indian, vehemently. "Peoples all want white boy make him picture! White man too fool make picture. White boy make so much him can, — make picture all day;

white man no do anything at all since white boy come."

"Is that true, Edmund?" asked his uncle, turning to the boy. "Is it true that he has not paid out any money for you, and that you make more pictures than he does, as this young Indian says?"

"He agreed to pay me for my work," said Edmund, "and it will more than pay for my board."

"Has he paid you anything yet?"

"No," replied Edmund; "but this Indian has sold bows and arrows and moccasins, and has laid some by to take me home."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Merton, turning to the profile artist, "as you have not yet paid my nephew for his work, I will consider that as an equivalent for your apprising me of his safety, and will settle his bill at the inn here myself."

"Well, I call that cool!" exclaimed the

artist, insolently. "I would n't have sent you that letter if I 'd known you was that kind of a fellow."

"So I should judge," replied Mr. Merton, coolly. "The reward belongs to the one who has made a sacrifice for the boy, and he shall have it!" and he laid his hand kindly on the young Indian's shoulder.

The young Indian looked at him in surprise. "What him mean?" he asked, turning to Edmund.

"He means that he 's going to pay some money to you for taking such good care of me," replied Edmund, joyfully.

"Injun no want money," said the young Indian, proudly. "Injun love white boy; white boy him friend, — no want money."

Edmund whispered something in his uncle's ear, to which he replied, "We 'll see."

Mr. Merton looked critically at the young Indian. He was such a fine specimen of

his race, and possessed such an intelligent countenance, that the examination was evidently satisfactory; for he said, —

"How would you like to go home with us and learn to read and write and be taught a trade?"

The Indian shook his head sadly. "Injun too fool for learn read and write. Him love forest, — no be happy in big town where white people live," he replied.

"It 's of no use, you see, Edmund," said his uncle; "he prefers his own way of living."

The young Indian refused to take any reward for his services, insisting that he took care of Edmund out of friendship, — because the white boy loved the forest and the moon and stars and brooks, as he did. After many entreaties from Edmund, he agreed to accept a small sum of money with which to buy presents to take back to Chief John, in order to compensate him for

the loss of the boy, for whom he expected to receive a reward.

Edmund accompanied his friend on an expedition to make the purchases, and was considerably surprised at his choice of presents.

The first object that pleased his fancy was a large feather duster, which he insisted on buying. Edmund rather demurred at the purchase of an article that would be of so little service in an Indian camp, but reflection convinced him that the chief's son knew his father's tastes better than he did.

His next choice was a military brass helmet, with a waving white plume; and then a "Jumping Jack" took his fancy, which toy was a source of the greatest entertainment to him. Several other presents of a similar character he selected, and to these Edmund's uncle added a fine rifle for himself.

Edmund, remembering his former charges, the little Indian children, contributed a large package of confectionery, and even sent a gayly colored handkerchief to the cross squaw who had been such a hard mistress.

The parting between the two young friends was a sad one; Edmund earnestly assuring his friend that when he was a man he should go to the West and find him out.

"Injun see moon; white boy see moon too," said the Indian at parting. "Wind go from Injun to white boy, — tell him what him knows."

"Yes," replied the boy; "when I see the moon, I shall know that she is looking down on you at the same time; and I shall feel almost as if the wind could take messages to you. I shall never forget you."

As the train left the depot, Edmund,

from the window of his car, waved adieus to his friend; and when he could no longer distinguish his figure, feelings of regret at parting from this warm and tried friend saddened him; but as he realized that he was being rapidly carried towards his old home, his sorrow at parting with his Indian friend gradually gave place to joy at the prospect of meeting his aunt and cousins once more. His uncle questioned him concerning the varied experiences he had undergone, and the boy truthfully and simply told his story from the day of his arrival at the farmer's to the date of his meeting with his uncle.

As his uncle listened to Edmund's modest account of his adventures, Mr. Merton's practical mind could but acknowledge the business instinct that had prompted the boy to turn to account his love for drawing. Wherever his fortunes had been cast, — at home, on the farm with the old man, on

board the fishing-schooner, then after the shipwreck when he made pictures to purchase food, again among the Indians, and last of all when with the profile artist, — everywhere and under all circumstances the boy's artistic nature had asserted itself; and the practical man of business at last understood that it was the voice of God speaking through the boy, and that it must be obeyed. As this conviction became clear to him, he resolved that henceforth his education should be in a direction to develop that talent.

As the train neared his old home, Edmund's impatience hardly allowed him to keep his seat; and during the drive from the depot, as one familiar landmark after another appeared, he felt like shouting aloud in his joy, as he would in greeting old and dear friends.

As they entered the driveway that led to his old home, the West-wind, that had fol-

lowed him through so many scenes, seemed to become as excited as the boy himself, and rushed along by the Brook, making it fairly leap with joy. It shook the long, silvery branches of the white Birch until every leaf danced with pleasure, and threw itself against the prim Fir-tree until she fairly quivered with joy, and in her excitement sent down a shower of needles that made her spare branches look more bare than ever.

As the wanderer passed the old Oak-tree, it swayed its aged branches until they creaked with emotion, and rustled its leaves as if to murmur a welcome; and unable to contain his emotions longer, Edmund waved his cap above his head and shouted out the glad feeling that was swelling his heart.

Kate and Fred came racing across the lawn, following the carriage with wild shouts up to the steps of the house, where Edmund's aunt stood waiting to receive him. And there, secure in the arms of his friends,

let us leave the little wanderer whom we have followed through so many varied scenes; although we would gladly catch a glimpse of him in his prosperous manhood, — a hard-working and successful artist, happy in the profession that is a source of joy to him and a pride to his friends.

THE END.

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